1960 GIBSON LES PAUL
In-depth and up close with a breathtaking original Burst

GARY MOORE'S LOWDEN
The story of the legendary Northern Irish bluesman's custom acoustic

WIN! A COMPLETE AUDIO-TECHNICA HOME RECORDING STUDIO
WORTH £335

The Guitar Magazine

MARCH 2018 Vol 29 No 06 **£5.50**

AMERICAN ORIGINALS

***Exclusive** first UK review of Fender's reimagined golden era electrics*

GUITAR SAFARI IN PARIS

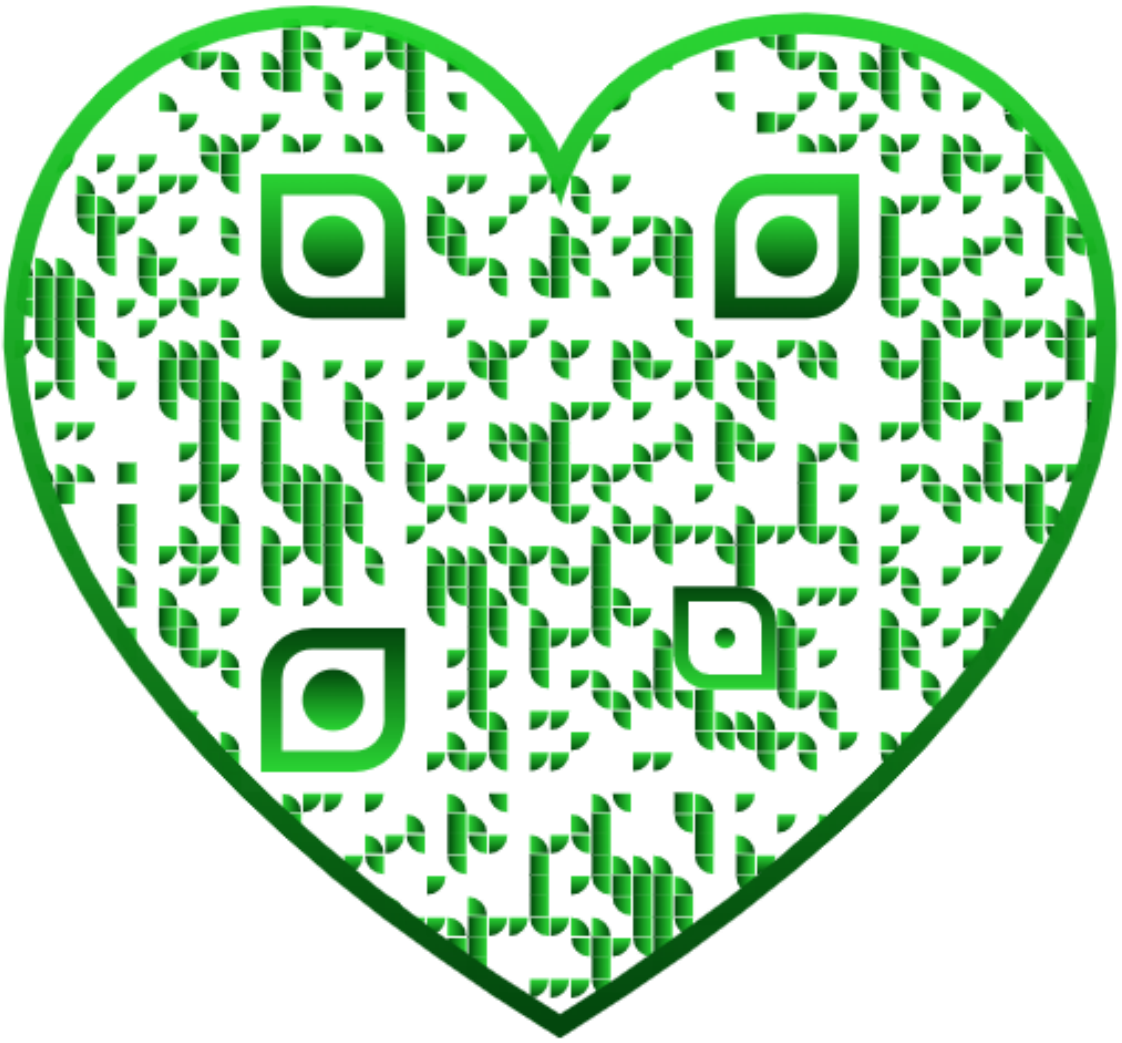
Vintage guitar hunting in the city of love!

REVIEWED

Fender • Rivolta
Swart • Breedlove
Danelectro and more...

ANTHEM
MAR 2018
Vol 29 No 06
£5.50

VINTAGE | DIY | REVIEWS | INTERVIEWS | TECHNIQUE



Found On Reverb
ThorpyFX - Boutique Pedals Built in the UK
BUY | SELL | PLAY
The world's largest marketplace
for musicians, Reverb.com/UK.

The Guitar Magazine

Anthem Publishing
Suite 6 Piccadilly House, London Road,
Bath BA1 6PL
Tel **+44 (0) 1225 489984**
Email **theguitarmagazine@anthem-publishing.com**

www.theguitarmagazine.com

Editor **Chris Vinnicombe**
chris.vinnicombe@anthem-publishing.com

Art Editor **John Thackray**
john.thackray@anthem-publishing.com

Managing Editor **Josh Gardner**
josh.gardner@anthem-publishing.com

Senior Product Specialist **Huw Price**
huw.price@anthem-publishing.com

Digital Editor **Sam Roberts**
sam.roberts@anthem-publishing.com

Contributors **Joe Bosso, Steve Clarke, Rod Fogg, Dave Hunter, Gareth John, Lars Mullen, Richard Purvis, James Stephens, Michael Watts**

Instrument & Cover Photography
Eleanor Jane

Managing Director **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com

ADVERTISING
Business Development Manager **Di Marsh**
di.marsh@anthem-publishing.com

Senior Sales Executive **Joe Supple**
joe.supple@anthem-publishing.com

Ad Production **Craig Broadbridge**
craig.broadbridge@anthem-publishing.com

ANTHEM PUBLISHING
CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com

Creative Director **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem-publishing.com

Marketing & Production Manager **Verity Travers**
verity.travers@anthem-publishing.com

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Print **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**
Tel 01902 730011

Distributed by **Marketforce (UK) Ltd**
5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU
Tel +44 (0) 203 787 9001

LICENSING
Regina Erak **07753 811622**
erak@globalworks.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES
anthem.subscribeonline.co.uk
Tel **0844 322 1291*** (UK)
Tel **800 428 3003** (US Toll Free)
Tel **+44 (0) 1795 414 781** (Rest of World)
Email **guitarandbass@servicehelpline.co.uk**
Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge

ANTHEM PUBLISHING

All content copyright Anthem Publishing Ltd 2018, all rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without prior consent of Anthem Publishing Ltd. *The Guitar Magazine* recognises all copyrights contained within the issue. Where possible we acknowledge the copyright holder.

ppa The Professional Publishers Association Member

In With The New

By the time you read this, another Winter NAMM Show will be done and dusted, but you can already read in-depth reviews of some of the hottest gear from Anaheim in this month's mag. In celebration of Fender's reinvention of the company's flagship vintage reissue series, this issue comes in two collectible flavours, with either the new-for-2018 American Original '50s Stratocaster or '60s Telecaster gracing our front cover.

Turn to p8 to find out what we made of both guitars – for Fender, each instrument represents a 'greatest hits' compilation of features cherry picked from the decades that defined the company. You can also find full video demos on www.youtube.com/theguitarmagazine alongside plenty more from the show floor at the biggest event in the industry's calendar.

On the acoustic end of the spectrum, this issue also comes bundled with a free 24-page supplement that tells the story of Taylor Guitars' revolutionary new V-Class bracing system. We take a deep dive into the science behind the technology and get up-close with an acoustic guitar design that reinvents the American steel-string and offers remarkable sustain, projection and stellar tuning all over the neck.

Back in the main mag, turn to p22 to find out what happened when Huw Price got to grips with around a quarter of a million pounds worth of mahogany and maple – any encounter with a Burst is memorable, but this 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard is among the very best we've ever plugged in and it has an interesting story to tell, too.

Finally, there are still a handful of tickets available for our 2018 Masterclass Series. Visit www.eventim.co.uk/masterclass to guarantee your place at an intimate audience with Darrel Higham, Jon Gomm or Guthrie Govan. All three are leading lights in their genres so prepare to be amazed! Enjoy the issue and I'll see you next month...

GET IN TOUCH

FACEBOOK
facebook.com/theguitarmagazine

YOUTUBE
youtube.com/theguitarmagazine

TWITTER
@guitarmagazine

INSTAGRAM
@theguitarmagazine

Or email **theguitarmagazine@anthem-publishing.com**

SUBSCRIBE

Turn to **page 60** to take advantage of this month's special *The Guitar Magazine* subscription offer.

In this issue...

THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS...

DAVE HUNTER

Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*. Check out his column on p24

HUW PRICE

Huw spent 16 years as a pro audio engineer, working with the likes of David Bowie, Primal Scream and Nick Cave. His book, *Recording Guitar & Bass*, was published in 2002, leading into his career in guitar journalism. He also builds and maintains guitars, amps & pedals

RICHARD PURVIS

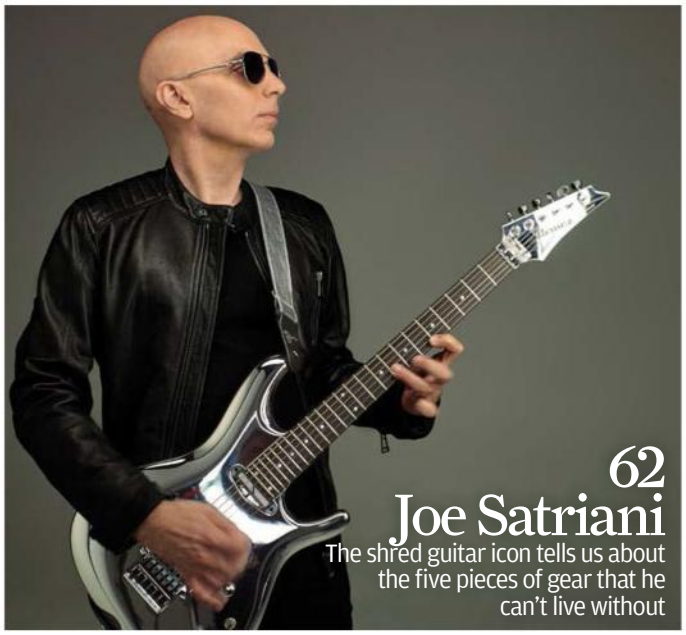
A reformed drummer, Richard has been gigging for over 20 years as a guitarist and bassist, and working as a music journalist for almost as long. He also composes music for television, and is legally married to his 1966 Gibson Melody Maker

08 American Originals

The UK-exclusive first review of Fender's brand new 2018 vintage-inspired Strat and Telecaster

76 Guitar Safari

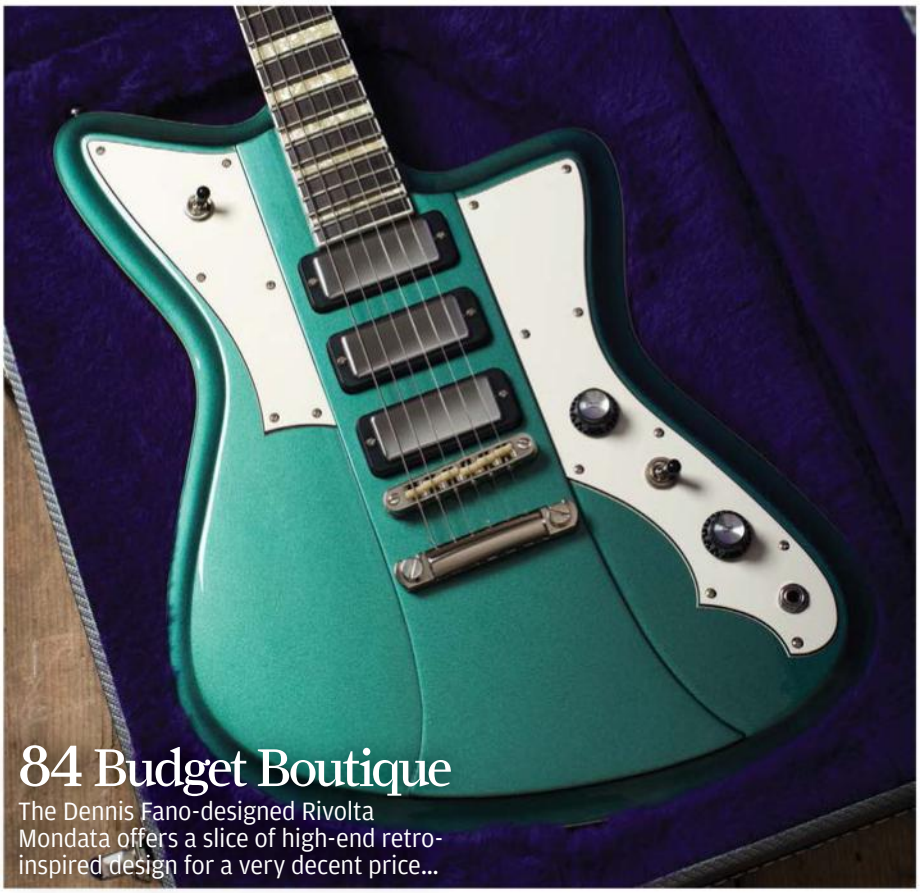
Fancy going vintage guitar shopping in Paris? We tell you where to go, where to avoid, and what to look out for...



62 Joe Satriani

The shred guitar icon tells us about the five pieces of gear that he can't live without

REGULARS THE MONEY SHOT **16** WIN! AN AUDIO-TECHNICA HOME STUDIO **20** LETTERS FROM AMERICA **34** ONES TO WATCH: PHOEBE BRIDGERS **52**



84 Budget Boutique

The Dennis Fano-designed Rivolta Mondata offers a slice of high-end retro-inspired design for a very decent price...

88 VIGIER

92 BREEDLOVE

96 FENDER

104 SWART

VINTAGE & BOUTIQUE

Vintage Bench Test **22**
1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard

Private Collection **38**
Phil Armitage's Fender-heavy selection of closet classics

Founders Keepers **48**
Fender Custom Shop Gene Baker Stelecaster

Guitar Safari: Paris **76**
How to go vintage guitar shopping in the French capital

FEATURES

The Reverb Top 10: Overdrive **46**
The best-selling overdrive pedals you need to try

Joe Satriani **62**
The five pieces of gear the shred king can't live without

Andy Scott's '63 ES-335 ..... **68**
Up close with the Sweet guitarist's legendary semi

GEAR REVIEWS

Fender American Original '50s Stratocaster & '60 Telecaster **08**
Rivolta Mondata STD **84**
Vigier Expert Classic Rock **88**
Shergold Masquerader SM04-SD **90**
Breedlove Frontier Concerto E **92**
Fender Hot Rod Deluxe IV & Hot Rod DeVille IV **96**
Supro 1685RT Neptune Reverb & 1699RH Statesman **100**
Swart Antares **104**
Danelectro Billionaire Pedals **108**

THE WORKSHOP

DIY Workshop **113**
Huw Price continues his Martin acoustic guitar kit build by getting into the brace position...

All About Les Paul **122**
The remarkable life of the guitar and recording innovator

Chord Clinic **126**
Rod Fogg on how to use sus chords in major progressions

The Guitar Magazine
Save 40%
WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE
TURN TO PAGE 60

WHY I LOVE: EZRA FURMAN **54** ALBUM REVIEWS **56** READER'S LETTERS **58** SUBSCRIPTION OFFER **60** TALKBOX: DARREL HIGHAM **130**

THE NEW GL-10
To learn more, visit:
www.lowdenguitars.com

Lowden
GUITARS

VOLUME
TONE
TONE

AMERICAN ORIGINALS

Launched ahead of NAMM 2018, Fender's American Original Series breaks with recent tradition and offers best-of-the-decade features rather than replicating specific model years. There are also some nods to modernity thrown in for good measure. **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** gets his hands on the '50s Stratocaster and '60s Telecaster for a UK-exclusive first review...

The American Vintage Series was a sweet spot for Fender. Priced just about within reach of mere mortals, with classic stylings, dimensions and nitrocellulose finishes – if you couldn't stretch to Custom Shop money then American Vintage was where it was at for a pro-quality USA Fender with a golden era look and feel.

2012 saw American Vintage get it last major overhaul, and the focus was on making 'em like they used to, with every curve, radius and neck profile reworked to bring the models closer than ever to the guitars that came out of Fullerton in the 15-or-so-year period during which it seemed that the company could almost do no wrong.

Wind the tape forward to 2018 and American Vintage is dead... long live American Original. Occupying the same position in the catalogue and with broadly similar pricing (happily some models are even cheaper than their 2017 American Vintage equivalents), instead of zeroing in on a specific year of manufacture, the American Original Series cherry picks features from across a chosen decade and adds subtle but player-friendly updates such as 9.5-inch fingerboard radii and vintage-tall fretwire.

Think of each instrument as a 'best of' album that combines the most popular features from a given decade

Although there are players out there for whom a 7.25-inch fretboard radius and an action with some fight is an essential part of the Fender experience, let's leave machismo at the door along with our 0.013-gauge strings for a moment – a 9.5-inch 'board radius almost certainly has broader appeal without the playing surface being so flat that it no longer feels like a Fender.

Justin Norvell (Senior Vice President, Fender Products) reveals that this change was in direct response to feedback from players: "Although 7.25 inches is 'vintage correct', that spec is of an era of wound G strings, really heavy gauges and not much string bending. People just play differently now. We felt strongly (and got a lot of feedback) about making these instruments more playable or 'fight back' less. This again comes back to our goal – looking to make great instruments to play, rather than making things the old way 'just because'."

When you count up the various finish and neck permutations plus lefties (of which there are two Strats and a Tele to choose from) and basses, there are 30 different flavours of American Original spanning three decades. We'll be taking a look at the offsets and basses in a future issue but we're kicking things off with the '50s Stratocaster in Aztec Gold and the double-bound Lake Placid Blue '60s Telecaster.

Think of each instrument more as a 'best of' compilation album that combines the most popular features from a given decade but dispenses with the experimental sound collage on side four that everyone skips over anyway.

With Relics now so commonplace there's undeniably something a little 'new shoes' about strapping on such pristine instruments, but the nitrocellulose paint-jobs (with a thin poly base coat for consistency) will soon begin to wear in the old-fashioned way, although the finishes appear to be a little more chip-resistant than the 'flash coat' lacquer on the 2012 models. And what finishes – the vivid Lake Placid Blue and Aztec Gold metallics practically jump out of the guitar cases and play the gig themselves.

Each guitar's Pure Vintage pickup set is carried over from the American Vintage Series, with the Strat equipped

LIKE THESE? TRY THESE...

Fender's Mexican-made **Classic Series** range offers a similar 'greatest hits' approach to features from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and the guitars also have a 7.25-inch fingerboard radii for the purists. Prices start at **£709** but if you want a lacquer finish too, then the Classic Series **'50s Stratocaster Lacquer** (**£969**), **'60s Stratocaster Lacquer** (**£989**) and **'50s Telecaster Lacquer** (**£969**) offer excellent value for money. All three come highly recommended

with a trio of '59s and the Tele a pair of '64 units. "The work we did on the American Vintage Series involved deep tonal blueprinting of the right tones and materials, so there was nothing to improve there," says Norvell. "The choice was more, 'which set do we choose?' Keeping the pickups with that 100 per cent vintage sound is a big part of what these are. We were careful with the things that keep the instrument 'true' – neck shapes, the lacquer finish and the pickups."

The neck profiles here – a Soft V shape in the case of the Strat and a mid-60s C for the Tele – are also derived from analysis of vintage instruments. "We were able to find great examples of each era and nail the dimensions and feel," Norvell reveals. "The interesting thing about the vintage era is how different several examples could be, since they were all hand-cut and sanded all the way through – so there are okay ones, good ones, and great ones. The great thing about modern CNC technology is that we can make the 'great ones' extremely repeatable within very tight tolerances."

The Strat's neck is a delight – it's a slice of luxury without the Custom Shop price to match

The bodies are nicely svelte. Both guitars are in that happy weight zone between seven and eight pounds, while the Strat's plunging contours are as comfortable today as they were 64 years ago and will still be 64 years hence. Alder bodies arrived in mid-1956 on Sunburst Stratocasters but blonde models retained ash – our review model's body is alder, but should you want the ash-bodied '50s Stratocaster experience then the White Blonde model is your go-to.

The double-bound Telecaster has similarly pleasing lines that tie-in with a general mid-60s vibe. The rosewood fingerboard features the larger pearloid dots that superseded clay position markers in early '65, but the headstock logo is of the earlier spaghetti type that lasted until the

fall of '64. There's no exaggerated router hump in the cutaway and in any case, router humps had all but vanished by 1964 and are barely perceptible even on the earliest double-bound Custom Telecasters from 1959. Time to climb back out of the rabbit hole and plug in...

In Use

For roots rock, 60s pop and R&B-inspired players who know how to use a low-to-medium-powered tweed amp, the Telecaster's combination of cut and punch is manna from heaven. Dave Davies, early Page, The Who, Fleetwood Mac, Petty, the Stones – it's all here and it doesn't take much effort to find it.

Again we're reminded that the common misconception about Telecasters sounding thin is exactly

that – there's a ton of bass available here, but the snap of the steel saddles helps ensure that even the much-maligned Tele neck pickup never sounds too woolly unless you force the issue with extreme tone control roll-off.

Compared directly to a 50s-style Tele with a swamp ash body, maple board, brass saddles and a flat-pole Broadcaster-style bridge pickup, the ash guitar has more growl, more midrange and more push but the American Original has more sparkle and twang and absolutely draws you towards the 1960s in terms of sonics and playing vocabulary.

Like its American Vintage predecessors of 2012, the '60s Telecaster's neck profile is no generic, overly-slim caricature of a C-shaped neck of the period. With a healthy 24.7mm depth at the 12th fret, the neck fills out in a pleasingly authentic manner but never feels like too much of a handful – and it will only get better with age.

The Tele's neck fills out in a pleasingly authentic manner but never feels like too much of a handful

Switching over the American Original Stratocaster, there's no denying that the gloss nitro-finished maple board has a little more drag than the Telecaster's unfinished rosewood. It takes a little getting used to but the fretboard edges have been nicely broken before spraying and once again, the sheer ergonomics and comfort of this design – especially dressed in such a wonderfully rich metallic hue – remind us how jarringly futuristic this instrument must have seemed to players back in the 1950s.

With a five-way switch and a rear tone control that rolls off highs on the bridge pickup as well as the middle, it's just about perfect. With the tone controls wide open the sounds are Stratocaster in excelsis, especially in positions two and four. Having a tone control on the bridge pickup is a real boon with overdrive – nowadays it's such a common mod, but if you haven't used a Strat with this wiring before, try knocking

ABBEY MODE.

Come together with Keeley's
30ms Automatic Studio Doubletracker.

KEELEY ELECTRONICS
RKFX.COM • 1-866-8GO-RKFX

KEY FEATURES

Fender American Original '50s Stratocaster

- **PRICE** £1,609 (inc hard case)
- **DESCRIPTION** Double-cutaway solidbody electric. Made in USA
- **BUILD** Alder body, bolt-on maple neck with 9.5-inch radius fingerboard, 'Soft V' profile and 21 vintage-tall frets, bone nut
- **HARDWARE** Pure Vintage six-saddle synchronized vibrato bridge, Pure Vintage Single Line 'Fender Deluxe' machineheads
- **ELECTRICS** 3x Pure Vintage '59 single-coil pickups, five-way blade pickup selector switch, master volume, neck tone control, bridge/middle tone control
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.5"/648mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 42.0mm at nut, 51.0mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 23.2mm at first fret, 25.6mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.1mm at nut, 53.6mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 7.9lbs/3.6kg
- **FINISH** Aztec Gold gloss nitrocellulose (as reviewed), 2-Colour Sunburst, White Blonde (ash body)
- **LEFT-HANDERS** Yes, White Blonde only, no upcharge
- **CONTACT** Fender EMEA 01342 331700 **www.fender.com**

KEY FEATURES

Fender American Original '60s Telecaster

- **PRICE** £1,659 (inc hard case)
- **DESCRIPTION** Single-cutaway solidbody electric. Made in USA
- **BUILD** Alder body, bolt-on maple neck with 9.5-inch radius round laminated rosewood fingerboard, 'mid-60s C' profile and 21 vintage-tall frets, bone nut
- **HARDWARE** 3-saddle Vintage Style Tele bridge with barrel steel saddles, Pure Vintage Single Line 'Fender Deluxe' machineheads
- **ELECTRICS** 2x Pure Vintage '64 Gray-Bottom Single-Coil Tele pickups, 3-way blade pickup selector switch, master volume, master tone
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.5"/648mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 42.1mm at nut, 51.3mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21.4mm at first fret, 24.7mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.7mm at nut, 52.5mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 7.6lbs/3.4kg
- **FINISH** Lake Placid Blue gloss nitrocellulose (as reviewed), 3-Colour Sunburst, Fiesta Red
- **LEFT-HANDERS** American Original '50s Telecaster only (£1,549)

the tone back on the bridge pickup into gain. It offers much smoother and more pleasant lead sounds, tames any scratchiness in the high end and offers an almost P-90-like growl when playing aggressive first-position rhythm parts and riffs.

A comparison to an ash-bodied Custom Shop '56 model proves interesting – with our amp settings unchanged, the Custom Shop guitar is more explosive and woody but the American Original has an angelic clarity. Despite the gulf in price, there's no winner or loser as such, it's just preference. The American Original's Knopfler to the Custom Shop instrument's SRV is perhaps the most apt comparison, although the review guitar's shimmering trebles retain definition superbly into swirling effects or a heavy fuzz.

With more of a blackface-voiced amp and spring reverb, the American Original Strat's inherent clarity leads to many lost hours simply digging into bends and letting notes hang in the air. As supplied, the set-up is excellent, with the vibrato floating smoothly and returning to pitch accurately – there's also very little unwanted play in the arm. The neck is a delight too – though its 25.6mm depth at the 12th fret appears hefty on paper, the comfortably rounded shoulders and subtle transition from V to C mean that it doesn't feel it. It's a slice of luxury without the Custom Shop price to match.

For roots rock, 60s pop and R&B, the Telecaster's combination of cut and punch is manna from heaven

Whenever Fender reissues its classic designs, some observers will accuse the company of resting on its laurels, which ignores that fact that there's plenty of new ground being broken elsewhere in the company's catalogue. Like the American Vintage Series before it, American Original is about paying tribute to mid-century modern designs that still look and sound utterly contemporary. Some players will lament any departures from vintage spec, but most – this

writer included – will find the 9.5-inch fingerboard radius and vintage-tall fretwire provides a 'best of both worlds' solution that's genuinely easier to play in higher registers, especially when bending strings. There might be 'no money up there', but there's a whole lotta fun.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Glorious looks, excellent build
+ Pricing is competitive and realistic
+ Impressive sounds and playability to match

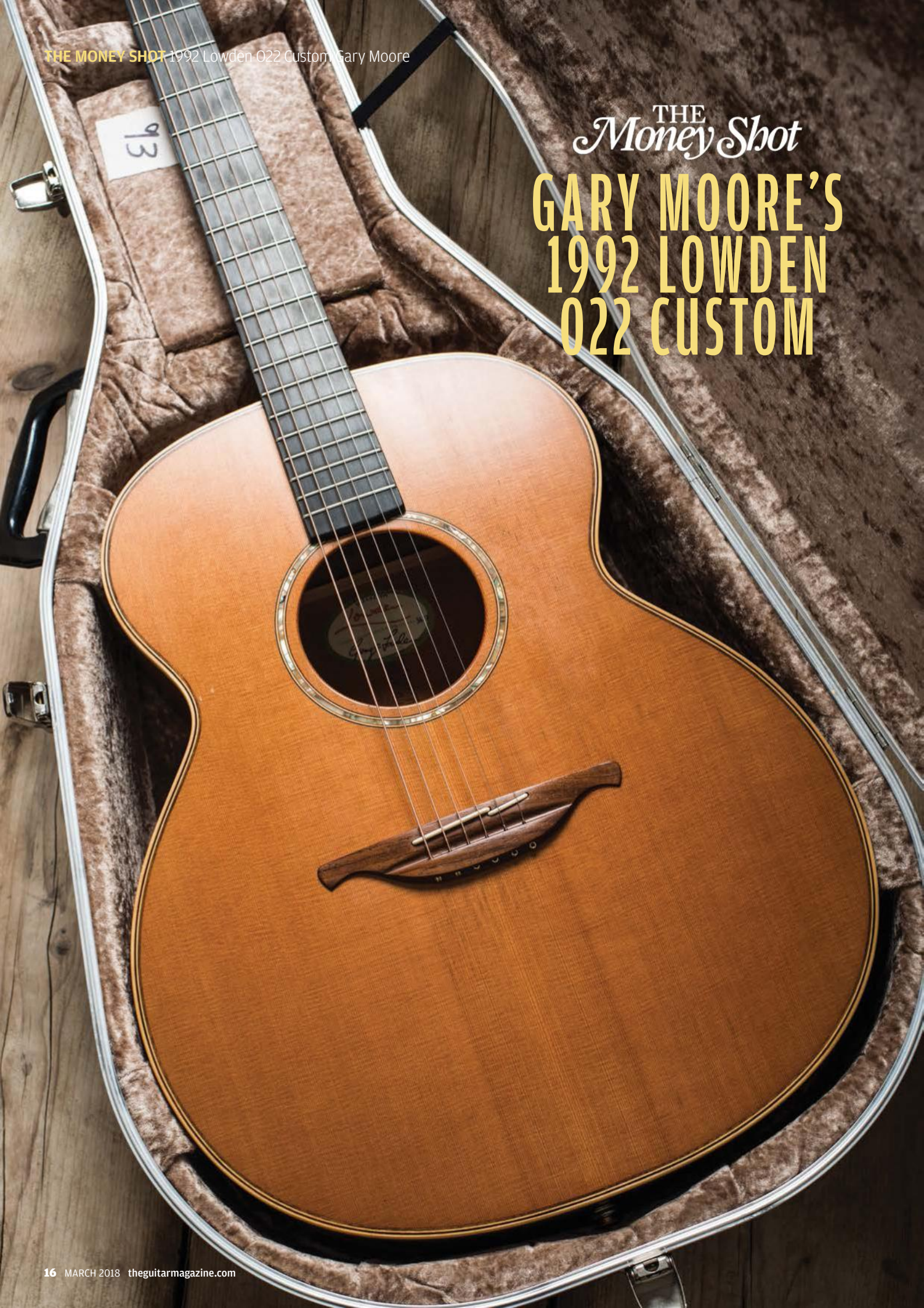
– Some players still prefer a 100 per cent vintage-accurate reissue

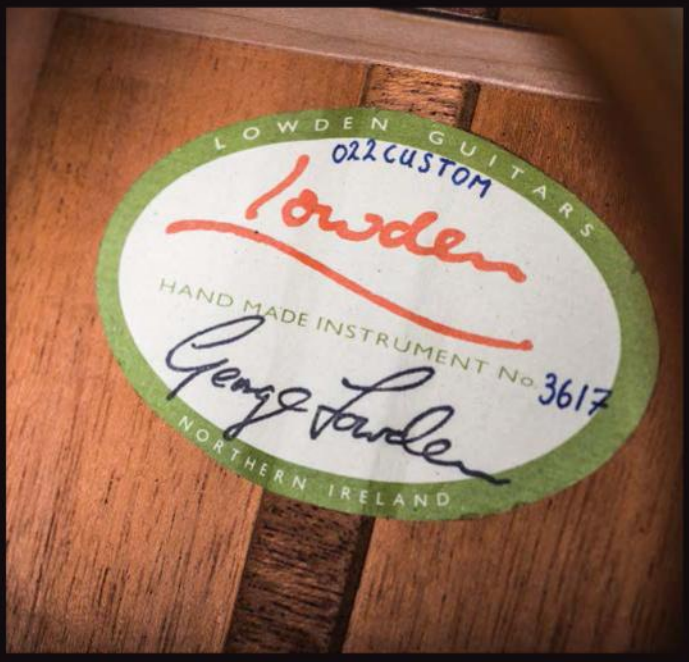
Offering the flavour of an era along with a smoother playing experience, the American Originals hit all the right notes for fans of Fender's greatest hits

9/10

THE *Money Shot*

GARY MOORE'S 1992 LOWDEN O22 CUSTOM





The late, great Gary Moore might have been better known for his electric guitar playing, but the Northern Irish blues icon knew his way around an acoustic, too – and in the mid-90s, his go-to was this O22 from George Lowden.

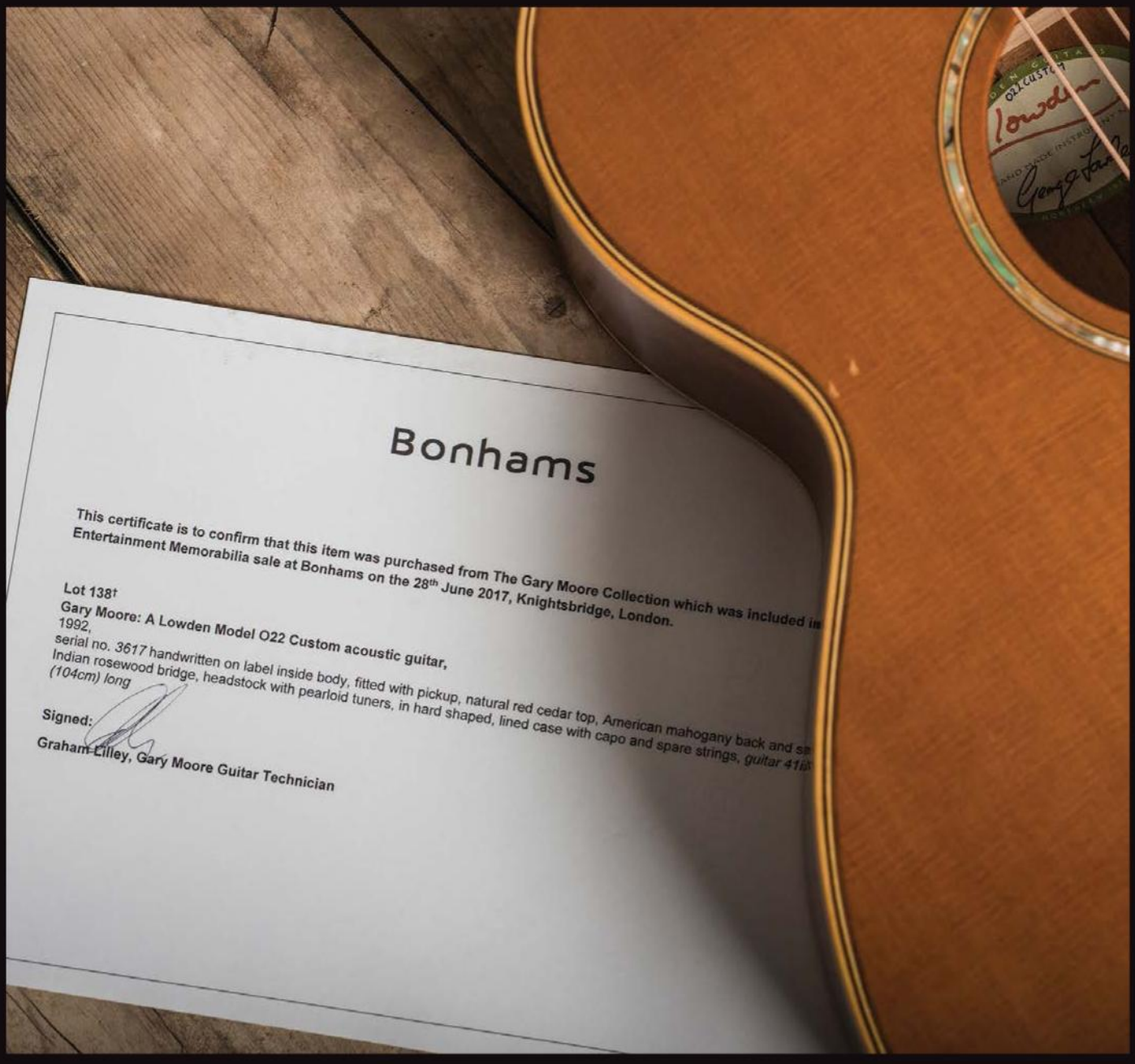
"The O22 was ordered by Gary in 1992 – it has a shallow neck carve, hence the 'Custom' designation," Lowden's Alastair Simpson tells us. "This kept it closer in feel to the electric necks he would have been used to. Gary grew up in Belfast less than 20 minutes away from George's workshop at the time."

Moore used the red cedar-topped guitar on Bruce-Baker-Moore's *Around The Next Dream*

album from 1994, and it was seen in the video for the single, *Where In The World*. It can also be heard at the start of Gary's *Blues For Greeny* live concert film.

Moore passed away in 2011, but when the O22 came up for auction in June 2017, Alastair knew he wanted it to come back to Lowden. "I'm always on the look out for interesting pieces that played a part in Lowden history," he explains. "I've spoken with Gary's son, Jack, who was delighted that his dad's guitar was coming home, so to speak.

"It's in remarkable condition. The case still had Gary's spare strings and old capo inside the pocket, and our craftsmen were queuing up to get their hands on this piece of Lowden history."



THE '60s JAGUAR. AMERICAN ORIGINAL SERIES.

CLASSIC DESIGN MADE NEW.

Fender

©2018 Fender Musical Instruments Corporation. All rights reserved. FENDER, FENDER in fanciful script, JAGUAR and the distinctive headstock commonly found on Fender guitars and basses are registered trademarks of FMIC. Registered in the U.S. and other countries.

WIN A complete Audio-Technica home recording studio!

Terms & Conditions
The closing date is 12.00am GMT 20 April 2018. The editor's decision is final. By entering *The Guitar Magazine* competitions, you are agreeing to receive details of future promotions from Anthem Publishing Limited and related third parties. If you do not want to receive this information, you can opt out. This giveaway is open to over 18s only. For full terms and conditions, please go to **anthem-publishing.com/competition-tcs**

The AT2035-Studio pack from Audio-Technica is marketed as the ultimate studio project kit, and with good reason – this handy all-in-one pack will provide you with everything you need to start recording music at home. And one lucky *The Guitar Magazine* reader can win one to kick of their 2018 recording projects in the best possible style!

At the core of the pack is the fantastic Audient iD4 audio interface, which delivers the performance of a large-format studio console in a portable package, enabling you to record vocals and guitar simultaneously. The iD4 is a two-in, two-out USB audio interface that includes one Audient Console Mic Pre input, a JFET instrument input, dual headphone outputs and console-style monitor control, giving you everything you need to record guitar and vocals into your computer.

But that's not all – to record your vocals or to capture the sound of acoustic instruments, the package also includes a Audio-Technica AT2035 cardioid condenser microphone. This side-address studio condenser mic delivers exceptional detail and low noise, and is equipped with a switchable 80Hz high-pass filter and 10dB pad. You'll also get a deluxe leather case and a custom shock mount to connect it to the mic stand of your choice.

All these brilliant sound-capturing tools aren't much good if you can't monitor things effectively however, which is where the ATH-M40x professional monitor headphones come into play. Tuned flat for incredibly accurate audio monitoring across an extended frequency range, these M-series cans will enhance your studio experience with superior sound isolation and swiveling earcups for convenient one-ear monitoring.

As if that wasn't enough to get you making music, the package also comes with £500 worth of free software and plugins, including Steinberg's Cubase LE and Cubasis LE2, and Eventide's Ultrachannel and Ultrareverb plugins to make your recordings sound as professional as possible.

To buy everything separately, the full package would set you back over £900, making this even more of an amazing prize for budding music makers – all you'll need is a guitar, a computer or iOS device, and some inspiration! For more information, visit **eu.audio-technica.com**, and to be in with a chance of winning this amazing portable home studio for yourself, simply visit the following link and answer the question below...

theguitarmagazine.com/comps/atstudio

Q *What was the name of the French mansion where The Rolling Stones recorded much of Exile On Main St?*
A Nellcôte **B** Lièvremont **C** Saint-André

Closing date 12:00am GMT, 20 April 2018

How do you make new friends if you don't talk to strangers?

You've tried theirs. It's time to try ours.
Too heavy? Lacking definition?
The SB59 will change your perspective on what a single cut, solid body guitar can bring to any musical conversation.

eastmanguitars.com

EASTMAN

VINTAGE BENCH TEST

Burst Of Friends

There are times when an instrument is so wonderful and iconic that staying appropriately impartial and dispassionate can be a challenge. With that in mind, this gorgeous 1960 Les Paul Standard is going to be a test for more than just the guitar. **HUW PRICE** feels fit to burst...

The top is a uniform amber except in those areas shielded from light by the poker chip, pickup rings and pickguard where traces of the sunburst remain

KEY FEATURES

1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard

- **PRICE** £219,995
- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody electric guitar. Made in the USA
- **BUILD** Mahogany body with set mahogany neck, bound rosewood fingerboard, celluloid markers and 22 frets
- **HARDWARE** Gibson Deluxe tuners, wireless ABR-1 bridge, aluminium tailpiece
- **ELECTRICS** 2x PAF humbuckers
- **FINISH** Nitrocellulose
- **SCALE LENGTH** 625mm/24.63"
- **NECK WIDTH** 43.35mm at nut, 52.61mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 22.5mm at first fret, 24.5mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.96mm at nut, 51.31mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 4.45kg/9.81lbs
- **CONTACT** Lucky Fret Music Co 0207 729 9186 **www.luckyfret.com**

The area adjacent to the fingerboard displays playwear from Doug's plectrum

Though it has had a refret, a decent job was made of it and the guitar plays flawlessly

Repro machineheads with Uncle Lou tips have been added, but the guitar was previously fitted with Grovers

Few of us will ever get the chance to play a real 1950s sunburst Les Paul – and even those who've been lucky enough to hold one in their hands will probably have had it whisked away after a minute or two by understandably twitchy owners or shop managers. But getting to spend a whole week playing an original Burst unsupervised, through our favourite amps? That's a once in a lifetime opportunity, and thanks to Lucky Fret Music Company, it's one that we're delighted to share with you this month.

Not all 1960 Bursts were created equal and 'Double 00' examples such as this, which precede the 07 models made later in the year, were reputedly built with leftover 1959 bodies and necks, and finished in the earlier non-lightfast finish. Consequently, the neck isn't skinny, there are no 'reflector' knobs and the front is about as far as it gets from the divisive 'tomato soup' sunburst. Even so, a vivid red colour remains under the pickguard and it can also be seen under the poker chip and the pickup rings.

Photos from 1972 clearly show that most, if not all, of the shaded areas had already faded away by then and, since the previous owner Doug Lock (see Locked And Loaded, p28), played with the pickguard off, the un-faded area is vivid even in black and white. The front isn't short of patina and in Burst parlance, this example qualifies as an 'unburst'. None of the shading remains visible and what's left is a uniform deep amber colour with subtle tints of orange and an even subtler hint of green.

Early 1960 Les Pauls were reputedly built with leftover 1959 bodies and necks

Lacquer checking is extensive and is most apparent across the face of the flame-free maple top. The nitrocellulose retains a deep all-over gloss, but the surface texture looks subtly different around the controls, with a hint of orange peel.

Four screw holes from a long gone Bigsby B5 have been plugged and lacquered over. In addition, there are two tight crack lines running across the pot shaft holes of the neck pickup controls. Under black light the entire top glows, but it's slightly darker in the area around the screw holes and the controls. We might conclude that the area in question has had a light blow-over.

The back of the neck blacklights nicely, too, but we are informed it was also sprayed over at some point. However, the added lacquer has since been cut back across the neck's playing area and given the sheer quantity of original lacquer that survives, it's a mystery why anybody decided to overspray it in the first place.

There are some fairly deep and wide lacquer cracks running across the back of the neck, so it may have been an attempt to smooth out the feel. In that sense, the blow-over succeeds and the non-original lacquer shows up as deep and clear infills between the missing areas of cherry, with oxidised mahogany beneath. The same can be seen in various spots around the rear body edges.

A vivid verdigris is apparent on the control knobs, one of which is slightly deformed in a way that suggests heat was involved. The

The guitar's pickups are set unusually low with jacked up pole screws and this arrangement is crucial to the guitar's tone

neck pickup ring is cracked, but remains fully functional and the original pickguard is back on, albeit with a Pozidriv bracket screw.

Although the wireless ABR-1 bridge appears original, almost 60 years of string pressure has forced it into a slight downwards bend and the saddles all look a bit fresh. The aluminium tailpiece is a replacement, but it's a vintage Gibson wrapover bridge with the intonation grub screws removed.

Inside the control cavity, the routing and the characteristic router marks appear as expected. The tone caps are Astron metal foil types in ceramic housings with green lettering and these are often seen in 1960s LPs rather than the earlier Mylar bumblebees. Nothing suggests the solder joints have been touched – hence our unwillingness to pull everything out to read pot codes.

Previous owner, the producer Terry Thomas, reveals that the guitar was once fitted with Grovers, but the enlarged post holes have been expertly plugged and re-drilled. The Kluson-style tuners currently on the guitar are labelled Gibson Deluxe and they were made in Japan. They have the appearance of age and with Uncle Lou single-ring buttons, they look the part.

In Use

All the 1950s and very early 1960s Gibson solidbodies that we've played sound intriguing when played unplugged and this instrument is no exception. Addressing Les Paul Standards specifically, we've noticed variations that appear to correlate with body weight.

With its soft-shouldered '59 neck profile, it's hard to imagine a better playing Burst

At the risk of veering into gross generalisation, lighter Les Pauls tend to be louder with an airier sprang, faster response and deeper lows. Heavier ones often resonate with more midrange emphasis, tighter lows, softer treble, a smoother attack and sometimes longer sustain. Irrespective of weight, we always hear a resonance peak in the lower region of the upper mids that produces a woody growl suggestive of 'acoustic overdrive' with certain note combinations.

This 1960 falls on the heavier side of the vintage spectrum and conforms to our expectations for a weighty vintage Les Paul. It bears a closer resemblance to the 1955 P-90-loaded Goldtop we featured in the magazine a couple of years back than it does the PAF-equipped 1957 model from the same article. The '55 had a similar weight, yet it was unusually resonant – like that guitar, this can be felt vibrating where it rests against your body.

However valuable they may be, not all vintage guitars play well. Often this can be attributed to a setup that's long overdue or frets being worn out. This guitar's previous owner bought it to play, and had it refretted soon after. A pretty decent job was done and

A Bigsby B5 left the guitar with four holes in the top, so it's a double 'snakebite', but they have since been filled and lacquered over

The neck pickup ring was split before Doug acquired the guitar, but over four decades later it's still holding firm

Early photos of Doug playing the '60 show a missing switch tip, but he soon found this replacement

the fingerboard is in superb condition. Couple that with the soft shouldered depth of a fattish '59 neck profile and rock-solid tuning, and it's hard to imagine a better playing Burst.

Past experience teaches us to look for certain sonic characteristics in vintage Les Pauls and the 1960 doesn't disappoint in that regard. Through a clean amp, you get tremendous clarity, uncanny sustain, ever shifting harmonics and touch dynamics that can rival the finest acoustics. What's more, the controls behave as expected, cleaning up from the volume controls and rolling off treble from the tone controls without loss of clarity or definition.

Having ticked all of the fundamental Burst boxes, this guitar also has a very distinctive voice. It's less bright than some 1950s Les Pauls, as the 1960 channels its acoustic characteristics through heavily patinated double-black PAFs.

This Les Paul's magic is mostly in the midrange, but the sheer variety of tones it produces is astonishing. In large part this is due to a pronounced sonic contrast between

The verdigris on all four control knobs is a particularly vibrant shade of green

© Bulldozer/Derek Carter

Doug Lock (far left) on stage with Bulldozer

LOCKED AND LOADED

The name 'Duggie Lock' is stencilled on the Cali Girl case that comes with the guitar. Having previously belonged to Luther Grosvenor (aka Ariel Bender), this Les Paul was given to Doug Lock as a 21st birthday present in June 1971. He played it in various groups, including an obscure early 1970s British rock band called Bulldozer. There are two videos on YouTube that are merely collections of still photographs, but you can see and hear him playing this very guitar.

Bulldozer were managed by Ten Years After drummer Ric Lee and while recording at Escape Studios in Kent, the band was interrupted by the roar of a hot-rod pulling into the driveway, driven by none other than Jeff Beck. Beck quickly spotted Doug's Les Paul and said, "Nice axe, man." Soon after Beck began playing it. Doug fled the room exclaiming, "I can't handle this!" but his bandmates continued jamming, with Beck using Doug's guitar throughout.

Having also played with The Graham Bond Organisation, Doug was obviously no slouch on guitar himself and his bandmate Derek Carter describes him as "a proper blues player". However, when his musical career didn't take off, he became a guitar tech for Frank Zappa, Steve Winwood, Bad Company and Jimmy Page. Doug recalled that Page's first words to him were, "You're going to have to anticipate when I break a string". He also tour-managed for Motörhead and worked as a guitar tech for The Moody Blues with his voice featuring on *Under My Feet* and his offstage acoustic playing bolstering live performances.

After contracting pneumonia in the early 1990s, Doug and his long-time partner Joy Arnold relocated to Ireland. The Les Paul was sold to help finance new ventures and Doug soon developed successful sidelines as a guesthouse owner and fly-fishing instructor. As a member of the Rock And Roll Fly Fishers Club, he even got to cast with Eric Clapton.

Doug stayed on in Cork after Joy succumbed to cancer but in 2010, Doug also died. His friend Joani wrote the following. "He played the slide like the devil but unfortunately sang like a cat trapped in a door and when the amp was turned up to 11, I put on my wellies and took the dogs for a really long walk! I could still hear him at the top of our land."

Doug once offered some words of wisdom to one of his guitar students, but they might apply to any of us. "You've got some good chops there but speed ain't everything. Imagine you are talking to someone through the guitar, you have to stop and take a breath or you'll pass out. The notes you don't play can speak just as loud as the ones you do." We would have loved to have shared a Guinness or two with Duggie Lock.

Special thanks to Derek Carter, Pete Isaacs, Chuck Lock, Gail Kirkham and Jeremiah Healy

Inside the cutaway there's extensive lacquer checking and the maple layer below the binding is clearly visible

the pickups. The cocked wah midrange resonance is most apparent on the bridge pickup, and it combines with a mellow sparkle and more than a hint of twang.

Picking single notes across a chord, the clarity of each note is something special, and yet everything gels together. Swap the plastic for a spot of fingerpicking and the warm cluck at the front of each note sounds not unlike Merle Travis playing away on his famous Bigsby guitar.

We have previously remarked on the P-90-like qualities of genuine PAFs, but this bridge pickup comes closer than any we have tried to the throaty growl and wiry snarl of Gibson's greatest single coil. Going head-to-head with a '54 Goldtop, the PAF sounds a tad brighter and more complex while the P-90 is more direct – however, differences between the alnico magnets should also be considered.

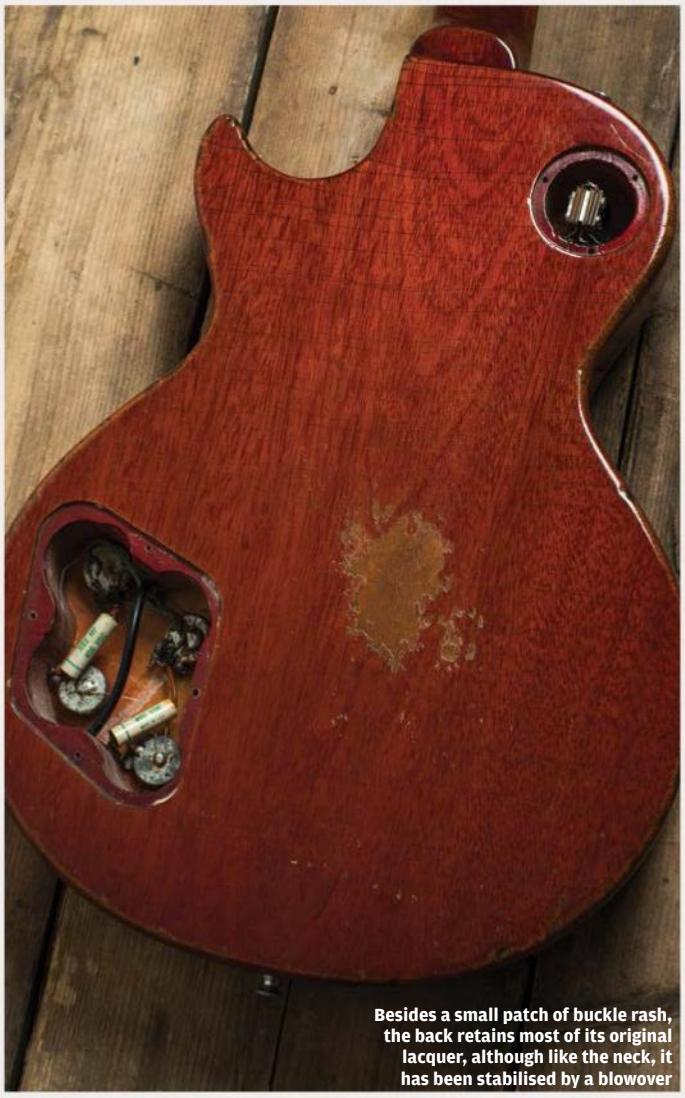
If you want prettiness or jazzy warmth, switch to the neck. Here the midrange resonance is far less pronounced and treble extends further, so it's closer to our previous experience with PAFs and the finest replicas. Notes are rounder, woodiness abounds and fast runs have an effortless fluidity. Single note attack is livelier and it's a rare thing to find this level of mellow refinement combined with such superb bass definition.

The in-between setting has the most pronounced contrast we've ever heard on a Les Paul. Often you're obliged to go looking for hollow and honky phasiness in the mids by balancing the volumes or even adjusting pickup height to zone in on the elusive quack point. This guitar hands it to you on a plate.

Overdrive can have a homogenising effect on guitars, masking subtle tonal characteristics, smoothing out quirks and compensating for a lack of sustain. With this guitar, the opposite occurs because an overdriven valve amp actually accentuates the clean characteristics. The bridge's growl becomes a snarl and then a full-blown roar. Meanwhile, the neck's vocal 'aaah' becomes a singing 'oooh' with a sweetly shimmering bite at the front of each note.

It transpires that the complex harmonic overtones we associate with PAFs are in there, and overdrive merely helps to draw them out. Remember that the Les Paul was designed for jazz and although this 1960 is a consummate clean guitar, its sheer grunt and strength through a cranked valve amp inspires awe.

The elephant in the room is of course, the cost of taking it home. This guitar was recently sold by Lucky Fret Music Co, and as you'd



Besides a small patch of buckle rash, the back retains most of its original lacquer, although like the neck, it has been stabilised by a blowover

Wiring in the control cavity appears largely untouched, with correct-for-1960 Astron metal foil capacitors and the original control pots

Overspray on the headstock has checked, so there's fresh checking over vintage checking

expect, the ticket was north of 200 grand. There's a vast gulf in price between Gibson's finest current offerings and a vintage Burst but this has more to do with their scarcity – and the paradigm-shifting recordings of Bloomfield, Clapton, Kossoff et al – than Fabergé-like craftsmanship or vast differences in the quality of materials and playability.

Whether we approve of the cost of this guitar or not is immaterial – vintage Les Pauls have long since become investment goods and are valued accordingly. The difference at this level is that the market decides a guitar's worth rather than the would-be owner's bank manager or significant other.

As such, those who can contemplate buying a real Burst will be well-heeled rock stars, serious collectors and investors – or maybe some combination of all three. For some of these individuals, the value of a vintage Les Paul as a musical instrument or cultural artefact will be secondary at best and the issue is not whether they can afford it, but whether a specific Burst is worth the asking price.

We can justifiably lament the fact that 'ordinary musicians' can no longer afford them. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the Kahler trem retrofits, stripped finishes, shaved necks and added switches inflicted on many vintage Bursts, were performed by well-intentioned 'players' rather than 'evil investors'.

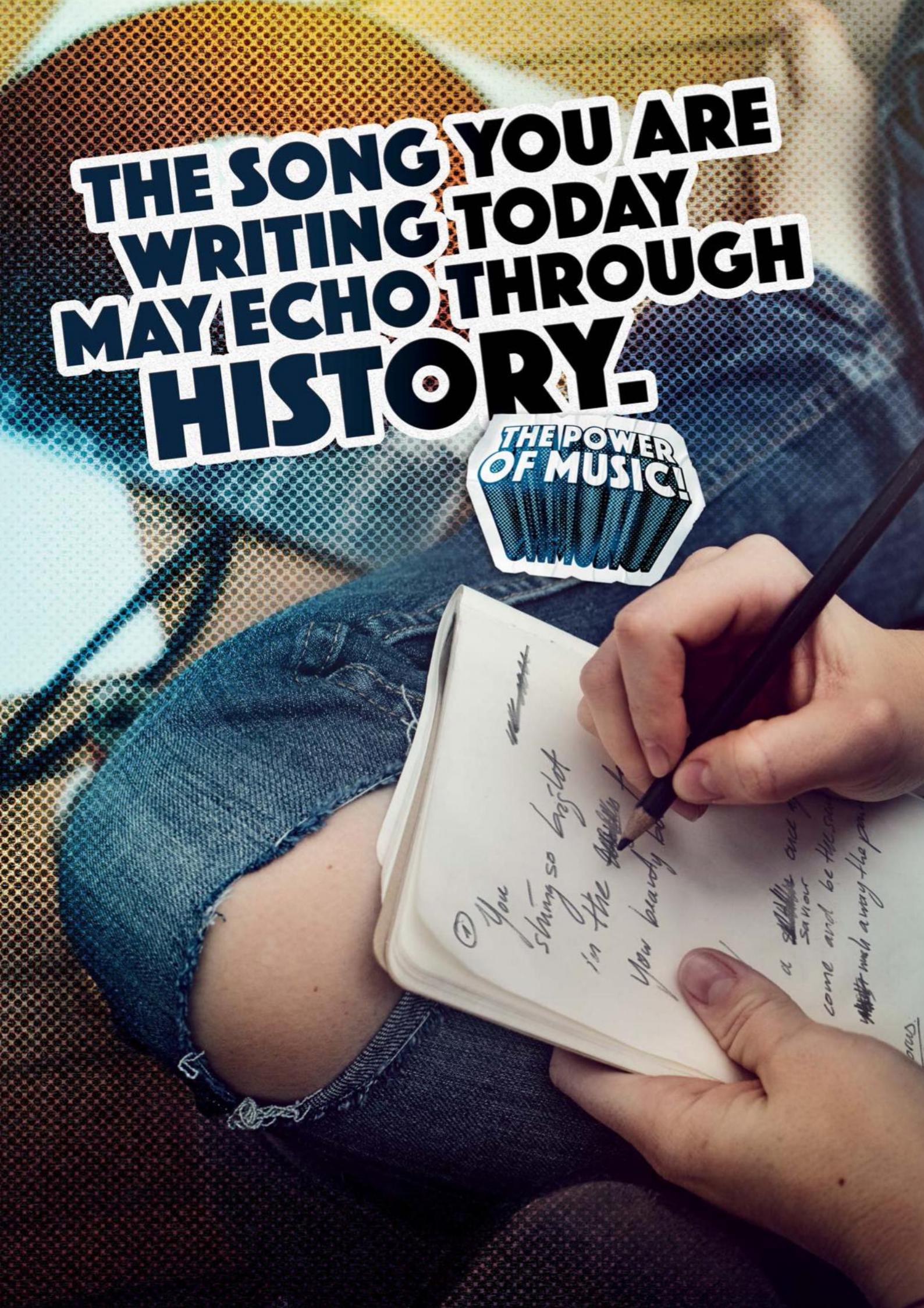
It's consoling that the early Les Pauls that survive will henceforth be treasured and preserved. Like certain antique violins, they may even play and sound just as good when they are three centuries old. Whether guitarists will actually be granted access remains moot.

However long we spend playing this, it keeps surprising us with different sounds

Is getting your hands on such a great sounding and playing original Burst a life-changing experience? That might be overstating things but our close encounters with these guitars have certainly transformed our understanding and appreciation of the Les Paul Standard as a player's instrument. They are so different from what we expected, and significantly better.

However, at the risk of offending the Burst blowhards, we remain unconvinced that age is the determining factor when it comes to a guitar's tone. This is easily one of the finest electric guitars we've ever played, but if you understand how to combine the right type of hardware and electronic components on a suitable body, it's possible to experience something unnervingly close to vintage Burst tone without having to buy an original. We'll expand on this theme in a future issue!

That said, any player discovering how subtle, complex, versatile, delicate and ferocious these guitars can be, will never again dismiss vintage style Les Pauls as old school blues or rock instruments. However long we spend playing the Duggie Lock Burst, it keeps surprising us with different sounds and new textures. We suspect that it would take months or even years to truly get to know this guitar, and it's difficult to imagine a more inspiring musical instrument.


THE SONG YOU ARE WRITING TODAY MAY ECHO THROUGH HISTORY.
THE POWER OF MUSIC!

th•mann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

DAVE HUNTER
Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of numerous books including *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*

Letters from *America*

TEX AMPS TEXOSOUND BERNIE CUSTOM

You'd be forgiven for thinking this neat little combo is a genuine relic of the golden era, but **DAVE HUNTER** finds out that the Texosound is equally authentic inside...

There are a lot of nifty amps out there on the so-called boutique scene, many of which will easily elicit rapt oohs and ahhs from valve-heads such as yours truly. Some lesser number of these, however, stand out immediately as being something a little more special – somehow inherently akin to the magic and mythos of the more lust-worthy vintage amps. This little Texosound Bernie Custom combo from Tex Amps is one such creation. If I didn't know otherwise, you could easily convince me this was a little-known Vox or Selmer offshoot of the late 50s or early 60s dug out from beneath the bed, raring to roar back to life deep in the second decade of the 21st century. Yeah, it's just that cool.

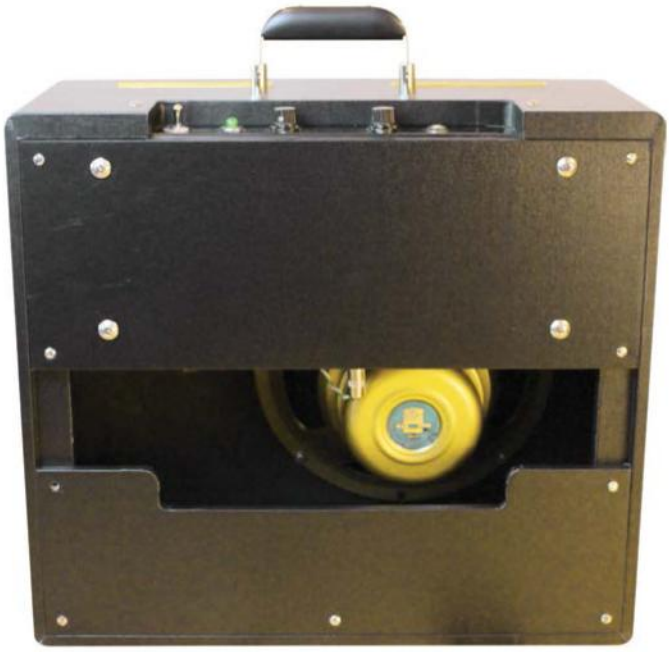
Tex Amps are the work of Tony Teixeira (you'll also see them listed occasionally as Teixeira Amps), and have nothing whatsoever to do with Texas. Based in Toronto, Canada, Teixeira's amp-building business is an offshoot of the Shyboy & Tex amp and guitar repair and sales operation that has been fuelling satisfied musicians on the local scene for many years, and under which banner he's done tech work for the likes of Daniel Lanois, and Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee from Rush – while notable players such as Colin Cripps (Blue Rodeo, Kathleen Edwards) and Jeff Tweedy (Wilco) have been plying their trade on his Tex amps.

The Bernie model is a descendant of a handful of amps that an elusive Canadian engineer named Bernie Raunig crafted from the chassis and transformers of Bell & Howell Filmosound projectors several years ago, but in Teixeira's hands (with credit offered to fellow Toronto tech Martin Newall, a transplanted British engineer who helped iron out kinks in the circuit layout), this template has evolved into something very much its own thing. In short, it was translated by Teixeira from to a diamond in the rough with rats-nest wiring and largely cheap consumer-grade components to a diamond in an intricately crafted setting, done out with the best parts its maker can lay his hands on. This petite 1x10 combo puts out around 20 watts courtesy of a pair of EL84 output tubes, with two ECC83s (aka 12AX7s) in the preamp and phase inverter, and an EZ81 rectifier tube. Add it up, and the blueprint will ring bells with any players familiar with small-to-medium-sized British amps of the late 50s and early

KEY FEATURES

Tex Amps Texosound Bernie Custom

- **PRICE** Approx. £1,695, excluding shipping and duties
- **CONTROLS** Volume, tone
- **OUTPUT** 20w
- **TUBES** 2x 12AX7 preamp tubes, 2x EL84 output tubes, EZ81 rectifier
- **FEATURES** 1x speaker output with switch for 8 and 16 ohms
- **SPEAKER** 10" Celestion Gold (Celestion Vintage 10 standard)
- **WEIGHT** 12.2kgs/27lbs
- **CONTACT** texamps.com



60s, although this wee combo is likely put together more robustly than any of those 'student models' ever were, and is capable of some surprisingly pounding output, too. It's worth noting that the Bernie is also available in a 1x12 combo, as well as a version with an EF86 pentode front end, although Teixeira voices each version differently. The 1x10, for example, gets some circuit tweaking to enhance the low-end punch, priming it to sound big and full through its single 10-inch speaker and compact 18 x 16 x 9 cab, while the 1x12 is dialled in to avoid sounding boomy through its bigger driver.

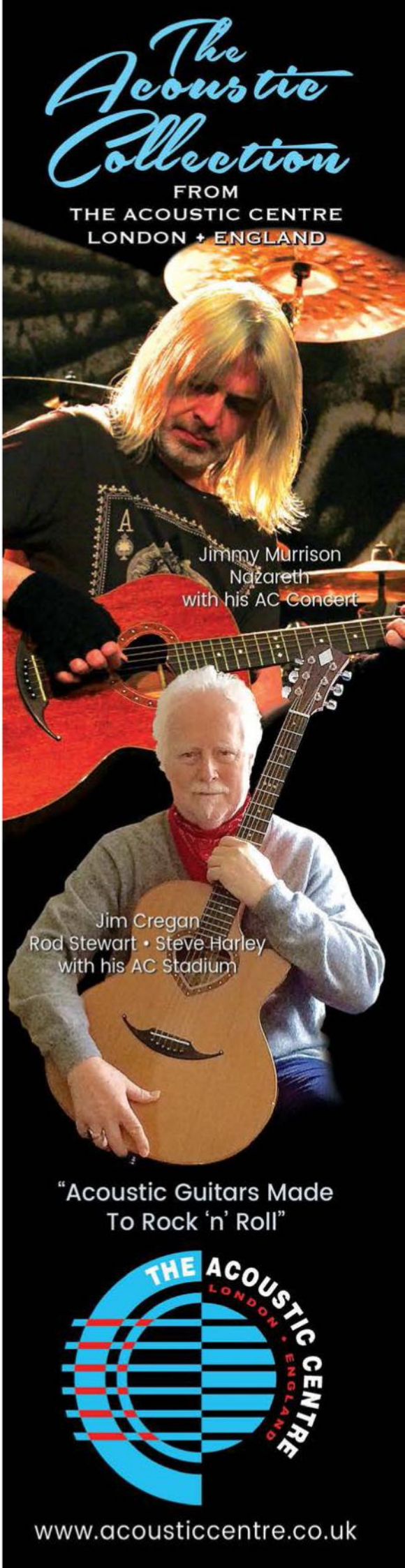
Classic Combinations

It's a tasty package outside, with a semi-smooth Rexine cloth covering the Baltic birch ply cabinet, an off-white cane-weave grille cloth, gold vents, and a smart black control panel. I dig the nifty hinged luggage handle, too, which echoes those used on some vintage Gibson amps, and also early Matchless combos. It all gets more lustworthy when you dip inside the heavy-gauge aluminium chassis, though, where Teixeira's skill really begins to shine.

Other than the pristine hand wiring on a custom heavy-duty eyelet circuit board, the first thing an amp nut is likely to notice is how Teixeira eschews current makes of capacitors and other parts in favour of more esoteric components. Every amp is a little different, because, as the maker puts it, "I sort of mix it up for a different flavour per amp build." But as far as caps go, he declares, "I only use NOS. I always use some Phillips 'mustard caps', often MKT tropical fish or yellow 70s Siemens types, Sprague Vitamin-Q, Russian military Vitamin-Q types, and I just got the West German ERO caps in that amp you have there."

Indeed, this particular Bernie chassis carries one of the vaunted 'mustard caps' in the unusual value of 0.082µF between the first two gain stages, three 0.022µF ERO caps further down the line, and a pair of white Siemens between the phase inverter and output tubes. The smaller filter capacitors are the Phillips and Siemens types found in loads of British and European amps of the 70s, while the big fellas are from Sprague and JJ. Pots are by Bourns, the rotary output-impedance selector switch is from Grayhill (who make the switches used in F-15 jets), and the knobs are from Dakaware.

And if it isn't NOS, Teixeira tells us, "Most everything in that amp is custom-made for me. I even had the tooling made for the vents." Among the more significant large components, in addition to a custom-spec'd Heyboer mains transformer, the output transformers Tex uses are custom-wound exclusively for his amps, and are exact replicas of an OT from a Canadian-made Bell & Howell Model 399 Filmosound projector. "The OT is a big part of the sound for both the Bernie and



my Texosound EF86," he adds. Tube-wise, the EL84s are a pair of respected NOS Russian military stock from the Reflektor plant, and the ECC83s in this example are from Mullard and RCA.

All this is coupled to a deceptively simple user interface; which is to say, there's just one volume knob and one tone knob. 'Deceptive' because latter taps an extremely interactive and unusual tone circuit that acts somewhat as a combined second gain stage and presence booster as you wind it up, adding brightness and drive simultaneously. Teixeira's usual speaker of choice for the smaller combo is Celestion's Vintage 10, although this amp – supplied for our review by Jason Berken, who, in addition to being Bob Dylan's touring amp tech, is also guitarist with Green Bay, Wisconsin indie band, the Snowbirds – carries its owner's preference of a 10-inch Celestion Gold. "Tony's attention to detail and ability to voice each amplifier like an instrument is what drew me to these amps," Berken told me upon shipping the amp out this way. "It's a great big sound in a perfect-sized beautiful box!"

This is the best sounding amp of this size that I've played in a long, long time – vintage or boutique

Having played the Bernie for several hours myself, I'm willing to say this is the best sounding amp of this size that I've played in a long, long time – vintage or new/boutique. But phrasing it like that is a bit misleading, because this Bernie belts out far more than a 'small amp', despite its diminutive dimensions and cute appointments. This is one loud little combo once you get it rolling, easily up to club standards, and could handle any gig with a mic in front of that raging 10-inch Gold.

With a Les Paul, a Telecaster, and a P-90-loaded Novo Serus J plugged in for testing, to my ears, this combo exhibits a near-perfect blend of punch, clarity and vigorously stout core with vintage-tinged snarl and compression, all wrapped in one enormously dynamic and enticingly chewy, complexly sonorous whole. Get the volume up to half way, and notes swell and swirl as you hold them, and even though you aren't getting screaming lead tones by this point, and there's no overdrive pedal in the front, it truly sings regardless, even sliding into easy harmonic feedback when you hold a note just right. Ultimately, I'd say it's just magically euphonic – with a thickness and richness even at lower-volume 'clean' settings that is very musical and appealing. And while it drives gorgeously under its own steam when pushed, this thing's robust voice and admirable headroom also helped to make it a superb pedal platform with an Xotic BB Preamp, a Gas FX Drive Thru, and a JHS Angry Charlie in the front end.

Exhibiting the best of what small-to-medium boutique can achieve, along with the personality of a great vintage amp, the Bernie still retains very much its own flavour. In truth, I'm floored!

ATB GUITARS

– FORMERLY ATOYBOY GUITARS –

WE BUY AND SELL VINTAGE GIBSON AND FENDER GUITARS FROM THE 50'S 60'S AND 70'S - THAT'S ALL WE DO, AS SIMPLE AS THAT!

Visit us at www.atbguitars.com for full details and quality photos of all items
Follow us on Facebook or Instagram for news of daily arrivals

– CURRENT STOCK INCLUDES –

1958 Gibson ES-335
1960 Gibson ES-335
1960 Gibson ES-345
1964 Gibson ES-335 (8 serial numbers from Clapton's)
1957 Gibson ES-350T

1956 Fender Stratocaster Blonde
1961 Fender Stratocaster
1963 Fender Stratocaster
1966 Fender Stratocaster
1968 Fender Stratocaster
2 x 1969 Fender Stratocaster
1970 Fender Stratocaster

1956 Fender Telecaster
1967 Fender Telecaster
1968 Fender Telecaster Thinline
1969 Fender Telecaster
1970 Fender Telecaster

1959 Fender Jazzmaster Blonde
1963 Fender Jaguar Blonde Gold

1969 Gibson Les Paul Custom
1971 Gibson Les Paul 58 RI
1973 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe Goldtop
1974 Gibson Les Paul Standard

1959 Gibson ES-175D
1961 Gibson ES-175DN

Plus a variety of vintage VOX and Fender amps from 1955 - 1964

WE WILL PAY EXTREMELY GOOD MONEY FOR SIMILAR VINTAGE GUITARS.

A selection of recent sales »

1967 Gibson ES-335 TD Pelham Blue

1957 Gibson ES-5 Switchmaster

1952 Fender Telecaster Blackguard

1956 Gibson Les Paul Standard MINT

1969 Gibson Flying V

1964 Fender Stratocaster Olympic White

www.atbguitars.com atbguitars atbguitars @atbguitars
Email: info@atbguitars.com • Tel: 07842 001007 • Int: +44 7842 001007

Private Collection

in association with Allianz

PRIVATE COLLECTION

CLOSET CLASSICS

Phil Armitage spent his working life as an examiner at the London College of Music. Now he's retired, however, he's had time to devote to a very organised kind of collection. **LARS MULLEN** takes a look in his cupboards...

Phil bought this relic'd T-type as he wanted a Jeff Beck-style guitar

As a guitar teacher, Phil Armitage prefers the personal approach rather than teaching over the internet. His career as a teacher began in 1993, when he first started as an examiner for the London College Of Music, having since taught in schools, colleges and even prisons.

"The London College of Music looked great on my CV," says Phil. "And actually started off my career as a guitar teacher. But a few years ago, I noticed I was the oldest geezer walking down the corridors, so as soon as I got my pension I thought, I'm having a change.

"The idea of packing up as a teacher didn't enter my head, so I decided to teach from my studio here in the North of England."

His new way of doing things also led to a reordering of his guitar collection, in the rigorously organised way that exemplifies a logical teacher's brain.

"As a guitar teacher and a performer, my philosophy is, while I'm teaching music, it's also important for me to play in front of an audience, and this new move also gave me the opportunity to organise and divide my guitar collection into four categories," he explains.

"I have a separate cupboard for quality gigging guitars – these are models that I look after, but are not that valuable – another cupboard houses the all-important guitars for teaching, another for guitars that I hope will appreciate in value, and one for guitars that have personal or sentimental reasons.

"I've spent years slowly trading my way up through the ranks and I'm always on the lookout at guitar shows across the country for that special deal. When a new one arrives, there's always the honeymoon period when I think it's the best of the bunch, but if it sits in the cupboard for six months, I'll move it on."

My 1971 Telecaster was five years old when I bought it, and in bad shape – I think it must have belonged to a punk!

Root Notes

Phil is prepared to teach the guitar in any style and while folk and classical are always a breath of fresh air, as you might imagine, rock and blues are the genres that inevitably lead the way.

"There are a lot of blues roots in my guitar collection and while I'm happy teaching all styles, it's a joy of joys for me when a student wants to learn blues on an acoustic guitar. I love teaching and talking about all the early iconic blues players, John Lee Hooker, Jimmy

Phil's '52 Esquire reissue (left) and his Deluxe Tele, both in Butterscotch finish

Phil often mods his Teles with Fender amp-style knobs

Phil's '73 pink Strat is his favourite, but he also loves his 2011 Thin Skin in Dakota Red

Phil's prized '71 Tele (left), his Danny Gatton signature model (centre) and his '51 Relic Nocaster

Reed and Big Bill Broonzy for example and the thumb picking style of Texas country bluesman, Mance Lipscomb, who played the same model Harmony Sovereign as I have, which dates from around 1957.

"It took me 10 years to find one in this condition with a solid spruce top and mahogany back and sides. Lipscomb had a style where he played with a thumbpick while palm-muting the low E string. This is also the ultimate test to see if an acoustic qualifies as a really good blues guitar, if the muted string barks and sustains, that's a good 'un."

The Sovereign isn't Phil's only Harmony, however, but his Metro Deluxe is something of an enigma. "It's a bit of a mystery as I can't find much information about it," he reveals. "Judging by the detail of the art deco inlays in the headstock and fingerboard, I'd say it was a typical f-hole acoustic archtop from the late 30s. It would have originally been used to belt out big chords in a dance band or similar. The action is way too high, but I've decided to

For teaching rock, Phil has a stable of humbucker-loaded guitars, including his 2015 SG Special and a Tokai Love Rock

leave it alone as it works well for slide. I still think that if you want to get as close as you can to the original sound, you really need a guitar from that period to do it with. A lot of these models have ladder bracing which I feel plays a major part within the sound of these classic acoustic guitars."

Leo Lover

Phil is of course well educated when it comes to guitar knowledge, but he can still recall the first time he heard an electric guitar as a 12-year-old lad...

"It was Buddy Holly," says Phil, "I knew nothing about electric guitars let alone what a Strat was or looked like, I just adored the big, percussive clear guitar tone he had. The technical turning point was when I heard *Green Onions* by Booker T and the MG's. Steve Cropper's guitar break on that Tele lit it all up for me."

The impact of Fender's two premier models on him soon led to him getting some of his own. "I then took an interest in the guitars themselves and the different sounds that they could produce. I started to realise that all the music I liked involved a Tele or a Strat, even the back beat on most of the Motown records was played on a Tele. I have six at the moment which have their own positions within the cupboard categories!"

For teaching metal and rock guitar there is a need for humbucker-loaded guitars and my SG and Tokai Love Rock are perfect for the job

Certainly from the 'sentimental' cupboard is his black 1971 Tele. "It was my second electric after my Watkins Rapier 44," Phil explains. "It was five years old when I bought it, and in bad shape – I think it must have belonged to a punk! I put up with it for a while, but eventually had it resprayed and refretted.

"My '51 reissue Relic Nocaster dating from 2003 is another from the personal corner – I purchased it with some inheritance money, so I think of this one as my dad's guitar. I like a light weight guitar and every little helps and, as you can see, I've replaced the metal control knobs with plastic Fender amp controls. This is my favourite Tele which I've been using for teaching electric guitar ever since."

Another to get the amp knob mod is his butterscotch '52 Esquire reissue. "I actually prefer these controls to the originals," he affirms. "I picked up on the idea after seeing them on the Muddy Waters signature Tele. I really like this Esquire, I feel there's something different on how you approach a one-pickup guitar. There's more of an awareness as you learn how to focus, on how

CODAMUSIC www.coda-music.com

JOHN PAGE CLASSIC

The custom design genius of John Page available at Coda Music

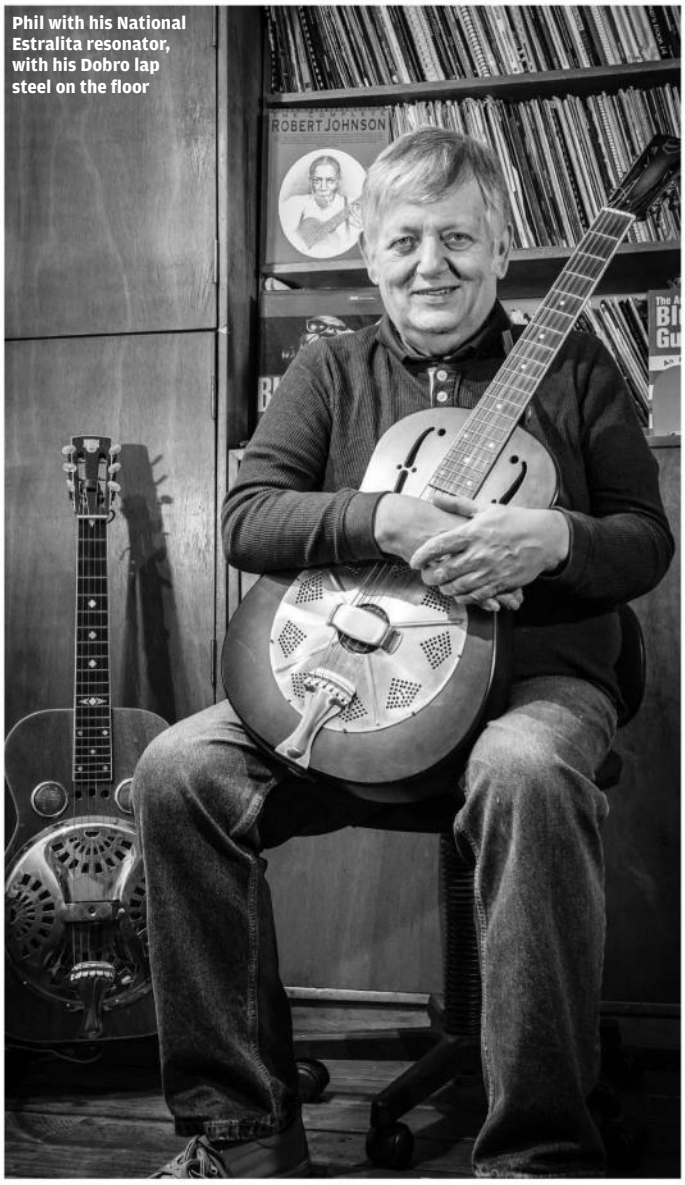
51a High Street, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3AH t : 01438 350 815 e : stevenage@coda-music.co.uk
Acoustic Centre 27b Church Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3QW t: 01438 350815 e: acoustics@coda-music.com

Instant decision 9 months 0% finance
available on all new products over £300 on our website

Phil's Harmony Metro Deluxe is a bit of a mystery, but probably from the 1930s

A trio of Martins – a 70s 000-15M (right), a D-15s (left) and his prized 1950 0-18 (centre)

Two more eclectic acoustics – a 70s Martin D-12/20 and a Harmony Sovereign from 1957



Phil with his National Estralita resonator, with his Dobro lap steel on the floor

hard to hit the strings for example and what is achievable from the guitar. I can almost relate this by to walking around the house with one eye closed!"

Another Tele that Phil brings out to share with us is his most expensive, a Danny Gatton Custom Shop model. "When I bought it, it was the most expensive Custom Shop Tele that Fender made, and I waited six frustrating months for it to arrive!" Phil recalls. "The Bill Lawrence pickups are pretty hot, but while they are also noise free, I feel they dampen a little natural Tele twang and sparkle. Gatton also asked for cubic zirconium side dots, which supposedly reflect the light so they can be seen easier on stage."

The most battered T-type he brings out for us is actually a faithful Chinese-made replica he picked up recently. "I've been after a Jeff Beck Esquire Tele for a long time, but have yet to find one with a price tag that suits my wallet," Phil says. "I saw this at a guitar show and was impressed by the relic work, the playability and the sound. It's not the real thing of course, but it's a real joy to play and sounds really good."

A Buddy Guy

To this day, Phil is still a passionate Buddy Holly fan and his collection reflects that fandom. "At the moment I have three Strats," he observes. "I've owned my pink '73 Strat for about 20 years, it's what I call a keeper, with the best sound out of the three. I'd have to be in a desperate situation before I sold this one. I actually swapped it for a Parker NiteFly at a guitar show. It has been refinished and loaded with a couple of Seymour Duncan pickups, this is a real player with a fixed bridge, which seems to be popular with collectors at the moment. I also have a Thin Skin model in Dakota Red from 2011. The lightweight body has a thin nitrocellulose finish instead of the more modern urethane or polyester finishes, this gives it a really cool 50s/60s vibe."

Another of his Strats might have a famous connection – if you believe the rumours...

"I was in a shop in the north of England looking for a Custom Shop Strat," Phil remembers. "I picked up on a buzz that was going around that this 2003 Custom Shop Relic '56 was once part of Peter Green's collection. I don't have any provenance, but it would be nice to think that it belonged to him. For playability and sound, this one is as good as it gets."

Rock Solid

When playing live, Phil leans more toward the lighter side of acoustic blues and folk, and he uses guitars to suit this, while still owning higher-output guitars for teaching the heavier side of rock.

"I rarely use any of these live," he explains. "But for teaching metal and rock guitar there is a need for humbucker-loaded guitars and my Gibson SG 2015 Special and Japanese Tokai Love Rock are perfect for the job. Floor effects help of course for overdrive in a small room and the small Yamaha THR5 and ZT Lunchbox combo, delivers a big sound in a confined space. They are great amps, also loud enough to gig with.

"The Tokai is really heavy though, but then again, Les Pauls were back in the day, the trend now is for ultra-light, chambered bodies. I have an '06 Gibson 1960 Les Paul reissue, which is on the light side and in pristine condition. I actually swapped this one for a Gibson acoustic."

Speaking of acoustics, Phil is putting together an intriguing collection. "It's building quite nicely now," he confirms. "In addition to the vintage Harmony models. I have a Dobro square-necked lap steel choice with the inverted tuners on the headstock and a wooden bodied National Estralita. I love the warmer mellow sound compared to metal bodied resonators – I had the latter with all the surfing characters on the back, but I found it far too metallic, this one is gorgeous.

"I also have three Martins that cover most popular styles of acoustic playing. My 70s Martin D-12/20 and D-15S – with their dreadnought bodies and 12th fret neck to body join – are perfect for big strummy chords, while the 000-15M also has a warm and balanced tone and is my number one guitar for teaching. The star of the show though is my 0-18 dating from 1950. I bought this little beauty with my superannuation money, I thought what the heck, I worked hard for so long, I'll treat myself. I call this one my heirloom guitar."

I thought what the heck, I worked hard for so long, I'll treat myself to this 1950 Martin 0-18. I call this one my heirloom guitar

Looking back on a life in guitars, Phil has found that his focus on playing in his day job has made the process of collecting all the more rewarding. "When your hobby becomes your work, you then need a hobby", he reflects. "And my hobby is collecting guitars. It was always my intention to profit from music and I feel I've achieved that goal, but I'm not going to stop!"

THE REVERB TOP 10

OVERDRIVE PEDALS

In the market for a new drive pedal? Dan Orkin of online musical instrument marketplace Reverb.com runs down the most popular dirtboxes that guitarists buy through the site...

Here at Reverb, we see thousands upon thousands of pedals and effects sell through our platform every year. From boutique shops and independent builders offering small-batch stompboxes to impassioned players simply selling a pedal they aren't using anymore, we see an incredibly diverse cross-section of pedal commerce that incorporates just about every make and model available to today's discerning guitarists. This constant flow of sales gives us an awful lot of data to explore and a unique vantage from which to examine various subsections of the market.

Here, we're taking a closer look at one such topic with a ranking of the most popular overdrive pedals currently on the market based on all sales – both new and used – that have occurred on Reverb over the past six months.

A brief note on qualification: when compiling this list, we filtered out pedals that are considered distortion pedals to focus instead on true overdrives. It's a fine line to be sure, but for instance, while the Boss DS-1 is always a top seller on Reverb, it and similar pedals are considered distortions and have therefore not been included in this list. Now, let's count down the top 10!

Seen something you need to add to your pedalboard? Head to Reverb.com and pick one up for yourself!

1 Electro-Harmonix Soul Food
The rise of the 'klone' – that is, any pedal generally based on the circuit and tone of the near-mythical Klon Centaur – as a distinct subspecies of overdrive has been one of the key storylines in the pedal world of the past five years or so. Everyone, it seems, needs to at least give a Klon-like pedal a go, and the ridiculously affordable Soul Food from Electro-Harmonix continues its reign as the most popular option.

2 Paul Cochrane Timmy
One of the key pedals in the wave of 'transparent overdrives' to emerge during the boutique pedal explosion in recent years, the Timmy continues to be a strong seller on Reverb. It's worth noting that because many larger retailers do not sell this pedal online, most buyers end up on our site, which drives up the rankings on this list somewhat.

3 Ibanez TS-9 Tube Screamer
The sound of a Tube Screamer driving a Marshall helped define the sound of hard rock in the 80s and plenty beyond. The venerable OD continues to be a popular option and may be the most popular drive of all if taken in aggregate with the half-dozen variations Ibanez produces.

4 Fulltone OCD
Fulltone is one of the elder statesmen of the boutique pedal world, and the OCD – or Obsessive Compulsive Drive – ranks as the company's most popular pedal. This drive is known for its rich, clear tones and wide sonic range, from mild grit to full-on breakup.

5 Xotic EP Booster
While more of a preamp than a proper overdrive, the EP Booster by Xotic recreates the preamp section of the classic Echoplex tape delay. When on a lower setting, the EP Booster is a fantastic 'always-on' tone enhancer. When turned up, however, it can overdrive a tube amp with the best of them.

6 Ibanez Tube Screamer Mini
Part of a newer series of diminutive replications of classic stompboxes from Ibanez, the TS Mini packs the power of the TS-9 into a tiny enclosure that can fit comfortably into even the most overstocked of pedalboards.

7 JHS Morning Glory
Now in its fourth revision, the Morning Glory is a longstanding entry in JHS's ever-expanding line-up. Like other transparent overdrives, the Morning Glory is known for not over-colouring the tone of the rest of your rig.

8 Boss BD-2 Blues Driver
While some take the name of this iconic blue box as indication that it's simply meant for SRV-esque blues licks, the Boss BD-2 is actually a rather versatile piece of gear that pairs wonderfully with other effects in your chain.

9 Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive
Boss's answer to the venerable Ibanez TS-9, the SD-1 is as classic an overdrive as overdrives come. It's versatile, rugged, and best of all, readily available on the cheap on the used market.

10 Lovepedal Amp Eleven
Lovepedal's Amp Eleven aims to deliver the tube-tinged tone of a proper overdriven valve amp. There's also separate boost channel built in, and bass and treble EQ knobs to offer you an open-ended pallet of overdrive tones.

Founders Keepers

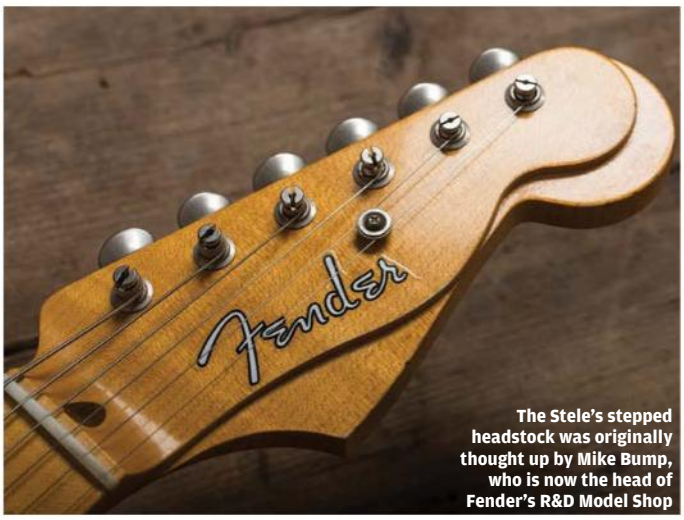
GENE BAKER FOUNDERS DESIGN STELECASTER

Gene Baker was a Master Builder at the Fender Custom Shop between 1993 and 1999. Following a stint as Chief Engineer/ Master Builder for Premier Builders Guild, in recent years his focus has returned to his b3 Guitars brand. **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** finds out what Baker has brought to the Custom Shop's 30th birthday party

When Fender announced the 2017 Founders Design Project, of all eight limited edition instruments on offer it was Gene Baker's artful mash-up of Strat and Telecaster that really set our pulses racing. Resplendent in a wide-fade Chocolate 3-Tone Sunburst Relic finish and featuring a sumptuous 10/56 V neck profile, plugging in doesn't disappoint – in fact it's an absolute tone monster with a tangible Blackguard vibe down at the bridge and fat, woody Strat neck pickup tones.

Position two provides a stark contrast to the usual hollowed-out Strat sounds, as the hand-wound Custom Shop pickups combine for some serious 60s power pop jangle and plenty more besides. We caught up with Gene Baker to find out more...

Gene Baker's time at Fender showed a love of hybrid designs, and the Stelecaster is no different


The Stele's stepped headstock was originally thought up by Mike Bump, who is now the head of Fender's R&D Model Shop

The Stele has a Strat's contours up top, but a Tele-style slab body at the bottom

Q Your work at Fender and beyond has exhibited a love of hybrid designs. When did you first start combining influences from more than one model and what do you think makes for a successful blend?

"I first started combining designs way back when I was 10th grade when I created my first unique design and basically continued from there. I feel there always has to be some sort of mental visual connection that makes shapes look familiar enough in order to be accepted within the first few seconds of a viewer's perception. For me its always required a series of flowing complementary arcs and lines that also have to equally balance into form, fit and function."

Q What were the main challenges when combining a Tele and a Strat?

"In one response I could say there was no challenge combining them. Leo did it right from the beginning on both models, but in the same breath sometimes it's just a matter of knowing where to start and where to end to get the most from the model. But the true challenge, I think, was to balance enough of both the Tele and the Strat to make it look almost normal to the point of requiring a double take – to look at it to go, 'Oh wow, now that's cool!'"

Q The stepped headstock is particularly ingenious. How did that come about?

"I cannot take credit for that as Mike Bump – who is currently head of the R&D Model Shop – created that way back in our early Custom Shop years. From what I remember, he originally used a later big peghead Strat with the Tele inside, where I choose the 50s era for the headstocks. I just thought it was so cool that it needed to come to life more than once, as Mike had shown a one-off at NAMM 1993 or 1994, if I remember correctly, with more of a Tele-like body with light Strat attributes.

"Sometimes I think it's the sum of all details that clearly rings a viewer's bell and it reverberates as, 'That's it!' I wanted something that looked like it really could have been built in the 50s without making it look modern."

Q What were the highlights of your career at Fender?

"You could say every single day was a highlight just working and mixing with that crew, as we had a strong core of very talented builders, people that were all very inspired to push the envelope raising the bar to a higher level of quality and shared their experiences.

"As John Page put it, 'We are the Marines, we have to do it better.' To pinpoint specific highlights, the Robben Ford Signature model – which was a completely hand-made guitar at the time with zero CNC support – that was considered a Master Apprentice level position.

"Then being pulled up in rank via John Page and JW Black, dubbed a Master Builder, and then Senior Master Builder at such a young age was an honour [Baker was at Fender between the ages of 27 and 33]. The Contemporary Carve Top Strat holds a special place in my heart, as well as the John Jorgenson Hellecaster signature model, the 'Bird of Fire' that debuted in the Steve Pitkin Custom Shop book and a handful of one-offs built for some special customers and NAMM Show display.

"There's a lot of great memories during a very influential period of my career. Most memories are of the people we worked with daily just as much as it was about the guitars produced, [it was] a very fun half-crazed, dysfunctional kind of family."

Visit www.fendercustomshop.com for more on the Founders Design Project

www.guitars4you.co.uk

Specialist in fine new and used classic guitars

Tel: 01335 345777 - Mon-Sat 9am-7pm

Showroom Visits: Appointment only - please call beforehand

USED PRS SELECTION

PRS McCarty Gold Top Soapbar - used/2008 ..... £1,490
PRS Mira Flame Top - used/2008 - violin amber sunburst £1,125
PRS Starla - silver sparkle - used/2011 ..... £1,099
PRS 513 Rosewood - McCarty Tobaccoburst - used/2007 ..... £3,290
PRS 513 Rosewood - dark cherry sunburst - used/2004 ..... £3,290
PRS Signature 408 Limited Edition - used/2012 - charcoalburst ... £2,699
PRS JA15 McCarty Tobaccoburst - used/2011 ..... £2,290
PRS EG-4 - used/1991 - electric red £1,099
PRS MC58 McCarty - jade green - used/2012 ..... £2,799
PRS Tree of Life Custom 24 Limited Edition - black goldburst - 2011 ... £4,899

SELECT FENDER CUSTOM SHOP

Custom Shop 1960 Relic Strat - aged olympic white £2,549
Custom Shop Clapton Strat - Journeyman Relic Aged White Blonde. £3,190
Masterbuilt Yuri Shishkov '63' Relic Strat - ocean turquoise £4,969
Masterbuilt Yuri Shishkov '63' Relic Strat - olympic white £4,969
Custom Shop Limited Edition Thinline Tele - Pink Paisley £3,289
Custom Shop Limited Edition Thinline Tele - Blue Flower £3,289
Custom Shop Limited EditionTwisted Tele - aged white blonde £3,149
Custom Shop Limited Edition Twisted Tele - aged blue sparkle £3,149
C/Shop Limited Edition 56 Fat Roasted Strat - aged desert sand £3,289
Custom Shop 57 Journeyman Relic Strat - 2 tone sunburst £2,750

Over 50 Custom Shop Strats and Teles in stock

A FEW TASTY NEW & USED GUITARS

Fender 1969 Tele + Bigsby £2,999
Fender C/Shop Limited Edition 62 Relic Strat - sunburst £2,935
Fender C/Shop 1956 Limited Edition Reilc Strat - faded foam green ... £2,899
Fender Custom Shop 1960 Relic Strat - aged fiesta red £3,099
Fender Custom Shop 1960 Relic Strat - fiesta red £2,549
Fender Custom Shop 53 Heavy Relic Tele - 2 tone sunburst £3,169
Fender Custom Shop 56 NOS Strat - fiesta red £2,699
Fender Custom Shop 56 NOS Strat - fiesta red £2,690
Fender Custom Shop 57 Journeyman Relic Strat - 2 tone sunburst £2,750
Fender Custom Shop 57 Journeyman Relic Strat - celadon green ... £2,750
Fender Custom Shop 61 Relic Tele - aged olympic white £2,999
Fender Custom Shop 62 Heavy Relic Strat - 3 tone sunburst £2,799
Fender Custom Shop 62 Journeyman Relic Strat - olympic white . £2,699
Fender Custom Shop 69 Journeyman Relic Strat - sunburst £2,899
Fender C/Shop NAMM Limited Ed. 51 Journeyman Relic Nocaster ... £2,899
Fender C/Shop NAMM Limited Edition 55 Journeyman Relic Strat ... £3,159
Fender C/Shop NAMM Limited Edition 55 Journeyman Relic Strat ... £3,159
Fender C/Shop NAMM Limited Edition 56 NOS Strat - white blonde... £2,675
Fender C/Shop NAMM Limited Edition '63' Journeyman Relic Strat.. £3,159
Fender C/Shop NAMM Limited Edition '63' Journeyman Relic Strat.. £3,159
Fender C/Shop Postmodern Relic Strat - Lake Placid Blue £2,590
Fender Masterbuilt Todd Krause 1963 Relic Strat - 2015 - sunburst .. £4,890
Fender Masterbuilt Todd Krause 57 Relic Strat - black - 2015 ..... £3,890
Fender USA Strat Plus Deluxe - black - used/1993 ..... £1,090
G&L ASAT Classic - butterscotch blonde - used/2007 ..... £975
G&L ASAT Semi Hollow T-Line - sunburst - used/2000 ..... £890
Gibson Custom '58' Les Paul Chambered - VOS - circa 2010 ..... £2,890
Gibson Custom Les Paul 1959 Reissue Tom Murphy Aged - 2012 ... £5,275
Gibson Custom Shop Standard Historic 57 Gold Top LP - 2016 ..... £2,959
Gibson ES335-S - vintage sunburst - used/2011 ..... £849
Gibson Les Paul Classic - Bullion Gold - 1991 ..... £1,990
Gibson Les Paul Standard - black - Used/1988 ..... £1,579
Gibson Les Paul Standard - heritage sunburst - used/1997 ..... £1,679
Gretsch 6122 Chet Atkins Country Gent - 1963 - mahogany £5,775
Gretsch Nashvile G6120 circa 1967 ..... £2,900
Musicman Axis Super Sport + trem - vintage sunburst - circa 2007 ... £1,079
PRS Custom 22 Livingston Lemondrop - used/2013 ..... £1,999
PRS Custom 24 10 Top maple neck - violin amber sunburst - 2013.. £1,899
PRS Custom 24 Vintage Yellow - used/1993 ..... £1,899
PRS SC250 Singlecut - '10' Top - natural - used/2008 ..... £1,690
PRS West Street Brazilian Limited Edition - 2007 ..... £3,399
Rickenbacker Combo 900 - used/1965 ..... £1,290
Rickenbacker 360/12 12 string - jetglo - circa 1997 ..... £2,159
Tom Anderson T- Classic - tobacco burst - used/2005 ..... £1,675

More tasty guitars in stock - visit www.guitars4you.co.uk

WANTED – QUALITY USED GUITARS | EXPRESS MAIL ORDER

E-mail: mark@guitars4you.co.uk

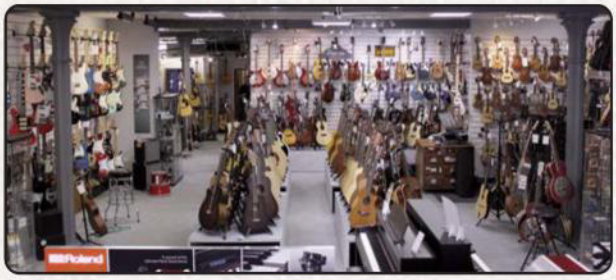
Forsyth Est 1857

FURCH GUITARS

Hand made in the Czech Republic, Furch Guitars are one of Europe's most interesing guitar brands and we have a large range of these attactive all-solid wood instruments in store

D-23CR 9 string
£1995

BAR-20CM
Baritone £995



Forsyths, located in the centre of Manchester with 15,000sq ft spread over five floors, has more than 150 years of expertise in musical instrument retail and services

ACOUSTICS

Main dealer for Lowden, Atkin, Brook, Moon, Black Swan, Patrick James Eggle, Martin, Faith, Auden, Seagull, Guild, Gretsch, Eastman, Aria, Crafter, Maton, Furch, Tanglewood

CLASSICALS

Main dealer for Buguet, Ramirez, Raimundo, Sanchez, Ortega, Admira, Cordoba and Strunal

ELECTRICS AND BASSES

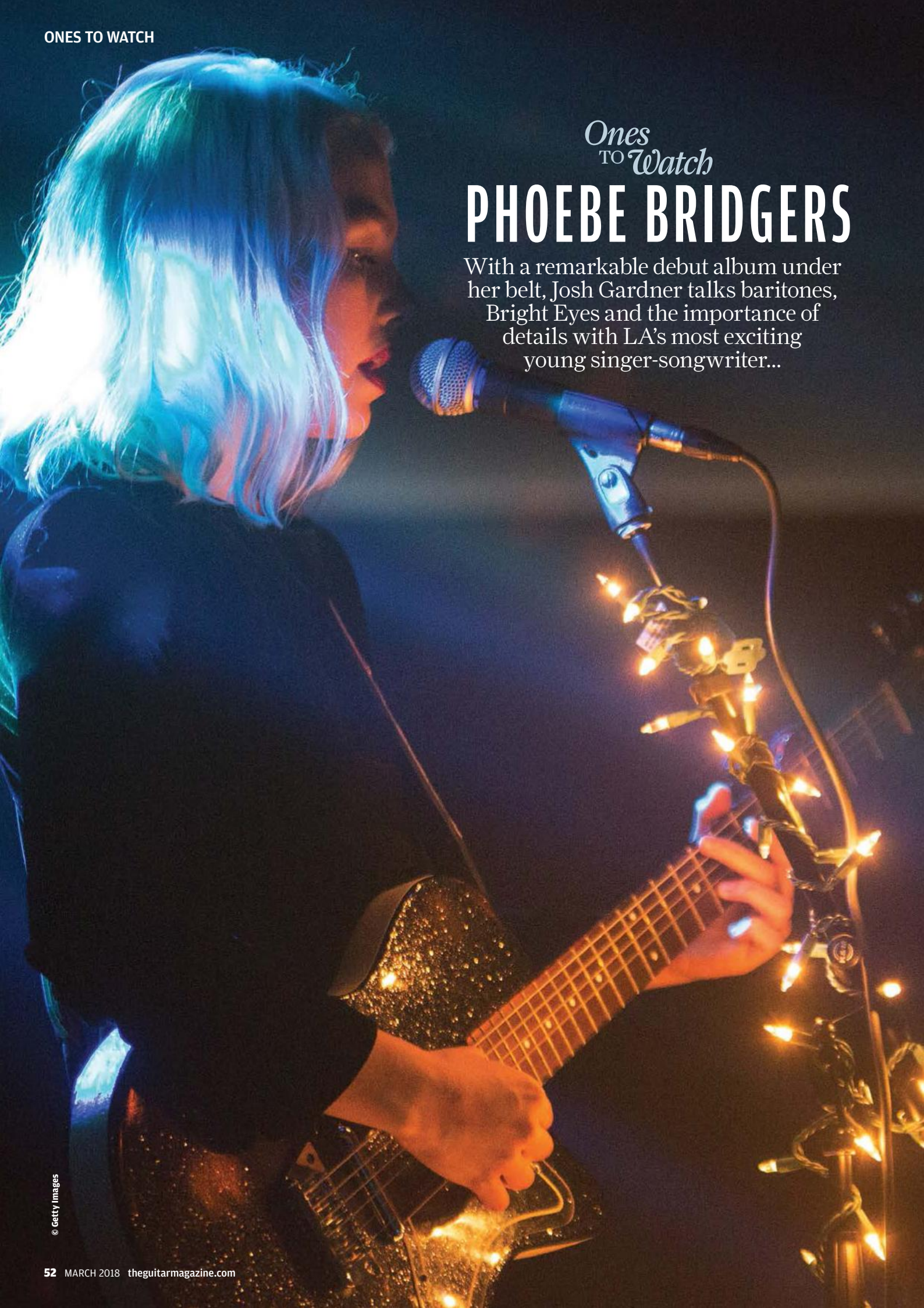
Main dealer for Rickenbacker, Gordon Smith, Eastman, Fender, Gretsch, Danelectro, Maton, Squier, Revelation, Aria, Hofner Godin 5th Ave

Repair department specialising in acoustic and electric guitars

www.forsyths.co.uk/guitars

Forsyth Brothers Ltd, 126 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GR
0161 834 3281 ext. 606 guitars@forsyths.co.uk

@ForsythMusic Forsyths.Music.Shop



Ones to Watch

PHOEBE BRIDGERS

With a remarkable debut album under her belt, Josh Gardner talks baritones, Bright Eyes and the importance of details with LA's most exciting young singer-songwriter...

© Getty Images

Phoebe Bridgers has had a unique and star-studded journey to seeing her remarkable debut album, *Stranger In The Alps*, on various end-of-year best of lists – but it all started with Hank Williams...

"I had a kid-sized guitar my entire childhood, then when I was about 12, a friend of my dad's bought me a full-sized Martin for my birthday, and that's what got me taking it really seriously," the 22-year-old explains. "The first song I learned on guitar was *Lovesick Blues*, and I listened to a ton of Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, and Neil Young."

With an unimpeachable bedrock in place, Bridgers embarked on her journey as an artist, with the tail end of the pop-punk boom of the turn of the 2000s also having a profound impact on the platinum-haired Pasadena, California native's emerging style. It's all culminated in *Stranger In The Alps* – an unflinchingly honest and real collection of songs that recall the wistful melancholy of fellow US indie darlings such as Sharon Van Etten, but also the deep, multi-textured work of late Portland acoustic genius, Elliott Smith.

"He's one of my favourite lyricists of all time," enthuses Bridgers. "And his layered guitar tracks can sound like a fucking orchestra."

Bridgers has picked up on that approach in her own writing, and it's this attention to detail that shines through on album standouts such as *Smoke Signals* and *Motion Sickness*.

"I tend to gravitate towards little details when I listen to music, so I think I started trying to do it pretty early on," Bridgers explains of her approach to layering in the studio. "I have a really long note on my phone of random stuff I think would sound cool in songs."

If *Stranger In The Alps* is remarkable for the maturity that it shows for a 22-year-old recording her debut, then its even more impressive given that the songs on the album are a mix of long-gestating compositions and new cuts. "It's about half and half," Bridgers explains. "The oldest song on the record, *Chelsea*, I started when I was a freshman in high-school. The newest – *Smoke Signals*, *Motion Sickness*, *Demi Moore* and *Would You Rather* – I wrote after we'd already started recording."

That's not to say that Bridgers' debut has come out of nowhere – she released her debut EP, *Killer*, on Ryan Adams' PAX-AM label, which Adams also produced and recorded.

> "The baritone really works with my range, and I love that it can make anything sound emo. It fills out the sound when I play solo"

"He actually texted our mutual friend Marshall, who had been trying to introduce us," Bridgers recalls of how she first came to the attenion of the Grammy-winning songwriter. "He asked him to send a picture of me, and I guess that was good enough because we went over to PAX-AM [Adams' Hollywood studio] that night. I played a couple songs and he invited me to come back the next day to record. I recorded the three songs for the seven-inch there, it took us about an hour. He also gave me the Epiphone Frontier that I've played on stage for two years."

One of the most distinctive features of the guitar sounds on *Stranger In The Alps* is the use of a baritone – an unconventional choice for sure, but Bridgers is now rarely seen on stage without her trusty black sparkle Danelectro baritone. It turns out that her introduction to a longer-scale was a serendipitous one.

"Tony Berg, who produced the album, had one in his studio and suggested it through a delay pedal for *Chelsea*," she recalls. "I went out and bought one that day at a guitar store on the West Side. Two dudes who worked there had a screaming fight right in front of me about who deserved the commission – which almost deterred me from buying it there – but I wanted it so bad, and it was sparkly, so I went for it! It ended up on a ton of the songs.

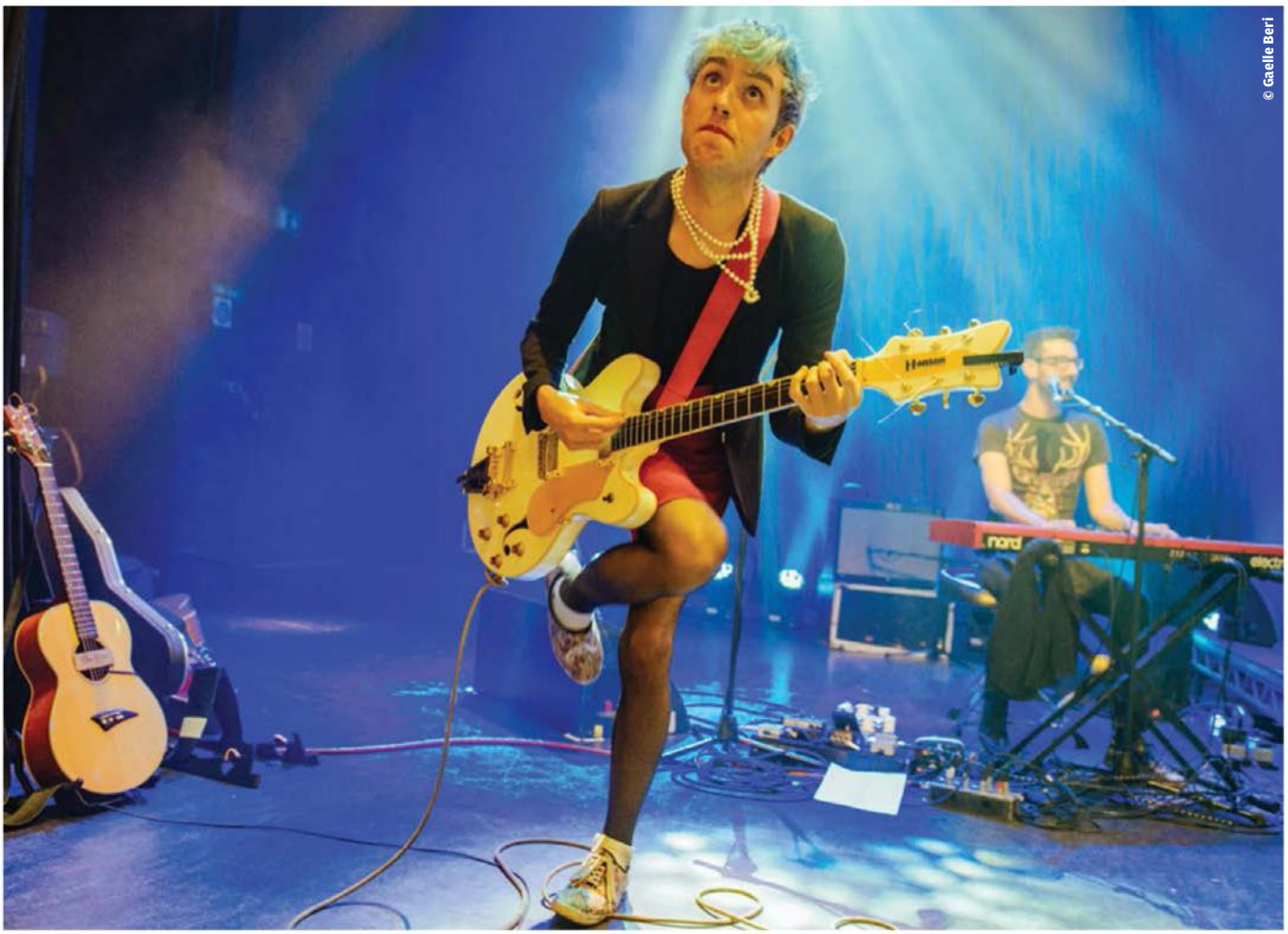
"It really works with my range, and I love that it can make anything sound emo. It fills out the sound when I play solo. And when I play as a three-piece – with my best friends Harrison Whitford on guitar and Marshall Vore on drums – it really helps when there's no bass."

The honesty and intelligence of Bridgers' songwriting is often compared to Bright Eyes, and it's a fitting comparison. Bridgers first supported the band's frontman and creative driving force Conor Oberst at a secret show in LA, and the relationship soon blossomed into a friendship that has seen the pair write and tour together.

"He's one of my favourite songwriters of all time, so it's a little intimidating trying to collaborate with him," Bridgers admits. "But I hope to get used to it. My music is definitely deeply influenced by him, and I'm also very envious of the freedom he's created for himself as an artist. He can genre-hop and start any kind of side project, and it all sounds like him."

With her debut album making such a strong statement, Bridgers is clearly well on the way to realising her own unique voice. We can't wait to hear more.

Phoebe Bridgers' debut album, *Stranger In The Alps*, is out now on Dead Oceans



Why I Love My... EZRA FURMAN

& HIS HANSON CHICAGOAN

The indie-rock guitarist tells us why he's so attached to this eye-catching Hanson semi – provided that you know the right code word, at least...

1 I love my...
"It's a white Hanson Chicagoan semi-hollow electric guitar."

2 How I got it...
"My previous guitar, a beloved black and white Italia Mondial, was starting to fall apart. My friend Nick Tremulis, a great Chicago musician, told me he knew how to get a discount at Hanson Guitars. You need to know the secret code phrase and say it to the person at the front desk at Hanson HQ. The catch is that you have to swear never to tell anyone – you can only give hints. So Nick began leaving a series of cryptic notes and objects on the front porch of my house. One every day for four days. It took some thought but I finally figured out the code word. I came into the Hanson place and gave them what I was sure was the code word. They looked at me like I was crazy. I told them Nick Tremulis had sent me and I knew the code word. They said, 'He's definitely just fucking with you... we can give you a discount on a guitar, though!' The code phrase was, 'mint chocolate chip dildo'."

3 It's special because...
"I think it's the pickups that make it sound so good to me. I don't know that much about that kind of thing. And the build of it, how wide the body is I guess, makes it feel good to play. It just feels and sounds and looks right to me."

4 It's perfect for...
"It's really good for opening walnuts. You kind of rest it on your knee with the walnuts on the floor next to you so that it easily swings down to crack the nut, and then bounces back up and falls down again slowly enough that you can aim for the next nut. It's preferable to have it plugged into an amp while doing this, and tuned to a really fucked-up sounding chord."

5 It sounds best with...
"When I pair it with a Vox AC15 amplifier it sounds like a hot greasy frying pan. That's my favourite thing for a guitar to sound like."

6 Hear it on...
"You can hear the Hanson in action on our track *Halley's Comet*, which is from our 2016 EP, *Big Fugitive Life*."

Ezra Furman's new album, *Transangelic Exodus*, is out 9 February on Bella Union

Dare to break traditions.
This Christmas, focus on the music with Allianz Musical Insurance by your side.
• Instrument & accessory cover
• Unlimited professional use
• Accidental damage & theft
• Premiums from £3 a month
Get a quote:
allianzmusic.co.uk
0330 100 9539
Allianz
Terms and conditions apply. Allianz Musical Insurance is a trading name of Allianz Insurance plc.

New Music

We round up and rate a selection of this month's guitar-driven new releases

Dan Patlansky
PERFECTION KILLS

ON The Guitar Magazine OFFICE STEREO

It's easy to feel like Dan Patlansky is still a relatively new name on the blues-rock scene, but *Perfection Kills* is the South African's eighth studio album, and is further proof of his growing stature and command of his instrument. In order to properly realise his vision for the album, Patlansky returned to South Africa to record at Scherzo Productions in his native Pretoria, and also decided to produce the record himself. The results bring us closer than ever to his famously intense live shows – with a loose, freewheeling vibe that is clearly a nod to the album's title.

Opening track *Johnny* kicks the door down with a huge, hammer-on heavy riff that grabs you by the lapels and pulls you along until the album's first euphoric and fret-blazing solo. But it certainly won't be the last. It feels at times like Patlansky can't wait to show you what he can do – *Never Long Enough* kicks off with some foot-tapping Rhodes action, but almost instantly, perhaps too quickly, giving way to a scuzzy, wailing solo, then settling back into some moody picked chords.

It's not all face-blasting blues-rock – though the album has plenty of those moments, not least the growling riffs and throbbing bass of *Too Far Gone* – and there's a fair number of more less intense numbers here, though nothing that you could really call a ballad. The closest he gets is probably *Mayday*, which sees Patlansky indulge in some tasteful bluesy soloing showing beautiful vibrato and perfectly timed bends... though that does inevitably give way to a powerful solo. Equally standing out is *My Dear Boy* – it sets its stall out early with his woody Strat tones worshipping at the altar of SRV... but then unexpectedly veers into bouncing pop territory, complete with slightly saccharine singalong chorus.

He's at his best when he's rocking, however. *Junket Man* goes into Pearl Jam-esque grunge at times – a style that suits Patlansky's throaty and impressive vocals – but also contains the album's most jaw-dropping solo, with his kinetic, fret-burning runs in the song's outro living long in the memory.

Closing track *Dog Day* is the album's lead single, and if you can ignore the occasionally scatological lyrics, it's a fitting summary of the album – blending a scuzzy, boot-stomping riff, yellable chorus, and of course a soaring, powerful solo that makes his Strat snarl and spit in the best kind of way. **JG**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE: *Joe Bonamassa, Philip Sayce, Stevie Ray Vaughan*

Jonathan Wilson

RARE BIRDS

In the five years since Wilson's breakthrough album, *Fanfare*, the 43-year-old has been busy. Not content with being Roger Waters' touring guitar player, Wilson has also been behind the desk for acclaimed albums by Father John Misty, Roy Harper and Conor Oberst. Now back doing his own thing, it seems Wilson has decided to transplant himself from mid-60s Laurel Canyon to late-60s St John's Wood – but with no less faithfulness than the sublimely sun-kissed *Fanfare*. It's no surprise that *Rare Birds* shows evidence of his time with Waters, as the dreamy opening chords of first track, *Trafalgar Square*, evidence. There's always been a sense of dreamy psychedelia to Wilson's music, but by pulling in the sonic hallmarks of Floyd, late-period Beatles and beyond, he brings greater variety to the likes of *Over The Midnight*, *Rare Birds* and *49 Hairflips*. Authenticity has always been the thing that sets Wilson apart from his revivalist peers, both sonically and atmospherically, and it's this care and attention that marks this out as one of the early contenders for album of 2018. **JG**

9/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE: *Pink Floyd, Father John Misty*

Michael Landau

ROCK BOTTOM

Session legend Michael Landau has a list of credits as varied and intimidating as anyone out there, but from the off it's clear that *Rock Bottom* isn't your standard guitar hero album, but something altogether more interesting. For starters he's enlisted the help of vocalist David Frazee to lift these songs above the standard instrumental jam fare, and there's a prevailing sense of brooding mischief about these 10 tracks that makes them feel like than just aimless muso noodling to boot. Opener *Squirrels* has a smoky jazz bar vibe, giving Landau ample opportunity to showcase his pristine Fender cleans, but when he turns up the wick and cuts loose, his sumptuous phrasing is given real room to breathe. It's not all groovy blues, however, and the quartet (completed by Teddy Landau on bass and Alan Hertz on drums) push the tempo on the likes of *Poor Dear* and *Bad Friend*. But while the musicianship is never less than superb, there's a sense that Landau works best when his stunning tone and sumptuous licks are given room to breathe and linger. **GJ**

7/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE: *Robben Ford, Allen Hinds*

Ezra Furman

TRANSANGELIC EXODUS

On his second outing for Bella Union, non-binary gender guitarist Ezra Furman reaffirms his leadership of the modern indie-vagabonds. *Suck The Blood From My Wound* begins elusively, before delivering a statement of acceptance, "We'll always be freaks", that's present throughout his records. *Driving Down To LA* is reminiscent of The XX meets St Vincent, with fuzzy guitars counterpointed by childlike xylophone melodies. On *God Lifts Up The Lowly* and the album standout, *Psalm 151*, Furman addresses his Jewish upbringing. The latter, played on a detuned acoustic, also reintroduces doo-wop melodies, saxophones and guitar solos through sliced speakers, picking up where *Perpetual Motion People* left off. *Compulsive Liar*, written on classical guitar, is an homage to beat music, warped in a digital haze. *Transangelic Exodus* tackles Furman's identity head on; an artistic record that's as much a personal catharsis as it is a beacon for misfits and outcasts, looking for a genre-less creative idol. **SR**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE: *St Vincent, Violent Femmes*

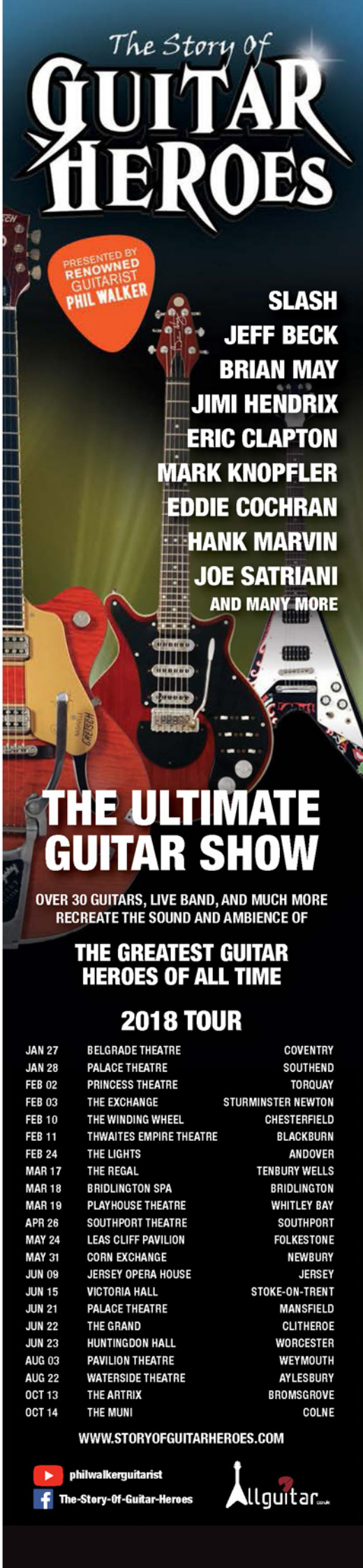
Umphrey's McGee

IT'S NOT US

"We've mastered our ADD here," says Umprey's McGee frontman Brendan Bayliss of the Chicago sextet's 11th studio album, and that certainly seems evident from the album's opening track, *The Silent Type*. The single blends a thumping dance beat with funky guitar stabs, a mean lyrical hook and soaring proggy leadwork in a coherent and accessible way that they've often wrestled with in their two-decade career. If you're expecting them to stick with that vibe for long, however, you obviously don't know Umprey's McGee – and it soon gives way to the angular 80s prog jam of *Looks*, and then the laid-back jazzy blues of *Whistle Kids*. It's jarring at times, but while throwing a load of genres at a wall and seeing what sticks would be a disjointed mess in less accomplished hands, *It's Not Us* navigates the waters with aplomb. It also showcases the chameleon-like guitar powers of Bayliss and his fellow guitar-slinger, Jake Cinninger, creating a feast of varied proggy virtuosity. **GJ**

7/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE: *Jerry Garcia, The Porcupine Tree*



Fretbuzz

Your letters. This month: Gibson's 'unusual' designs, Jaguar switches and tight neck pockets...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Gibbing It The Big One

Hi *TGM* team, just wanted to say thanks for your fantastic feature on the 60s Flying V that was in your February issue of the mag – I love those old Gibsons, and having a chance to see such a rare and gorgeous guitar up close. Would you consider doing something similar with some of Gibson's other 'unusual' designs in the future? Getting a really detailed look at an old Explorer or Firebird would be amazing!

As you might have guessed, I'm a bit of a Gibson fanboy, and I really loved your ES-335 tips feature you did last year [Revive Your 335, November 2017 – Ed], any chance of doing something similar for other Gibson models in the future? I've got an old 80s Les Paul Standard and a 90s SG Special, and while they were great guitars in their day, they're getting a bit eccentric in their old age and I'd love to bring them back to full health...

Phil Edwards, *via email*

***TGM** Glad you appreciated the Flying V feature, Phil, and while not exactly 'unusual', we hope you're suitably happy with our Vintage Bench Test of the incredible 1960 Les Paul on p22 and our feature on Andy Scott's 60s ES-335 on p68 – that's a lot of lovely Gibsons for your £5.50! As for your request for a feature about getting more out of your Les Paul, stay tuned next month, we think you'll find something in there that you'll like...*

WRITTEN A LETTER OF THE MONTH?

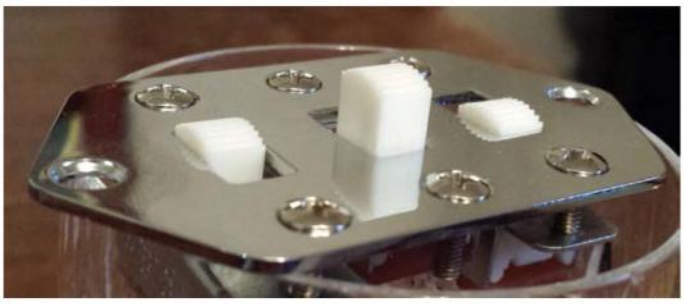
Then you win a Peterson StroboClip HD clip-on tuner worth £51.99! The SC-HD has the same tenth-of-a-cent accuracy as all Peterson Strobe Tuners, but in clip-on form, with a bright HD screen, over 50 Sweetened tunings and alternate temperaments for other stringed instruments.* For more, visit **petersontuners.com**

**LOTM prize is subject to availability and may change*

HAVE YOUR SAY! Write to us via snail mail, *The Guitar Magazine, Anthem Publishing, Suite 6 Piccadilly House, London Road, Bath BA1 6PL* or email **theguitarmagazine@anthem-publishing.com.** Alternatively, get in touch via social media on Facebook or Twitter.

facebook.com/theguitarmagazine **@guitarmagazine**

youtube.com/theguitarmagazine **@theguitarmagazine**



Switch Craft

Dear *The Guitar Mag*, I've been a 1963 Fender Jaguar player for the last 25 years now, and one of the common things that people ask when I tell them what guitar I play is how I avoid accidentally knocking the switches on the control plate below the pickups. This isn't something that I've often come across in my time playing Jags, but I have to admit that it's an issue – and one that I think has a simple and effective solution.

In short, I believe the switches make much more sense if they're mounted nearly flush, with just the hump poking above the plate. This enables you to still operate the switches by placing your finger on top of the switch (which is grippy already) and moving it that way.

It's very easy, and a spacer can be made to make up the gap and prevent dust getting into the wiring. If you wanted, you could even cut the switch tip down, but then you'd lose the grippy tip and of course there would be no way to reverse your mod. What do you think?

Paul Garrett, via email

***TGM** That's a really clever way to get around a longstanding issue, Paul – nice work. Do you know any simple and innovative ways to get around common foibles of certain guitars, amps or effects? Send them in and we'll print our favourites!*

In The Pocket

Dear *The Guitar Mag*, I bought a tired Japanese-made Strat a few years ago for a couple of hundred quid and have been unable to stop myself messing about with it since.

My mission was to make it sound as good as possible without wrecking it. I stripped the poly finish off, sprayed it with nitro, upgraded the pickups, and had fat frets installed. I also fitted a new trem block milled by hand from the finest steel. All these things improved the tone of the instrument and I though it was as good as it could be...

But then, I heard about a 'tone trick' and decided to try it. The idea is to get the end of the neck to butt up against the back of the neck pocket as tight as it can to help improve the passage of vibrations. This is done by leaving the guitar strung and tuned, and then carefully turning the neck screws anti-clockwise each by one turn. If there is any gap between the two pieces of wood then the tension of the strings will pull the neck up against the body. You then retighten the screws.

There was an unnerving creaking sound as I turned the screws on the Strat and after tightening them back the guitar was slightly out of tune, but it definitely did sound better! I was genuinely surprised at how much more character and sustain the guitar had. I tried it on another Strat and it worked and then on a Tele where it didn't, so it's not universal, but it took five minutes and was free!

Dave Rogerson, via email

***TGM** We tried this, but sadly we couldn't hear any difference with a couple of our Strats, Dave. That said, it only takes a couple of minutes and it costs nothing, so you'd be mad not to give it a go. Just make sure you don't unscrew any more than the single turn because you certainly don't want the neck breaking free under the pull of the strings. Also use a hand screwdriver to avoid over tightening and stripping the thread!*

NOTTINGHAM CITY Guitars

QUALITY

VINTAGE & USED GUITARS

- Selling quality vintage, rare & used guitars.
- All the usual suspects including – Fender, Gibson, Rickenbacker, Gretsch & Guild.
- We are dealers for new James Trussart Custom Guitars & Rickenbacker.
- Instruments are set-up and sold with a twelve month guarantee. CITES Certificates supplied as required.
- Our in-house workshop offers set-ups, repairs, re-frets, restorations, hand wired pickups, electrical work and re-finishing.
- We stock Cornell amplification & pedals, Effectrode Audiophile pedals, Mastery Bridge, Luxe Capacitors, Sfarzo & D'Addario strings and a range of guitar accessories and spares.
- We buy and part exchange quality instruments worldwide.

T: 0115 950 5909 | M: 07850 586 625 | E: andy@nottinghamcityguitars.com

www.nottinghamcityguitars.com Follow us on

SET-UP · REPAIRS · PICKUPS · SPARES · RESTORATIONS

Fender · Cornell · Gibson · Rickenbacker · Gretsch · Mastery · effectrode

7 Woolpack Lane, Lace Market, Nottingham NG1 1GA

DV MARK

markworld.it MARK WORLD

Eric Gales

"I can't believe the amount of tone and power that my DV Mark amp produces for me!"

DV "RAW DAWG" EG

Eric Gales partnered with **Marco De Virgiliis** to create the **DV Mark Raw Dawg EG** signature head. That's the perfect amp to let him get a powerful, dynamic and warm clean channel where he can create his tone together with his favorite pedals. It features a single tube driven channel and a 250 watts power amp, that's what Eric needs to deliver his heavenly music.

250W @ 4ohms / 150W @ 8 ohms, single channel, on board reverb

TGMP2906

Subscribe to The Guitar Magazine

YES! I would like to subscribe to *The Guitar Magazine*

☐ Just £17.96 every 6 months by UK Direct Debit - **saving 40%**

YOUR DETAILS

Title Forename Surname

Email address **

Address

Postcode

Phone number**

Mobile**

**Please enter this information so that Anthem Publishing Ltd can keep you informed about your subscription. You may unsubscribe from these messages at any time.

Anthem Publishing Ltd, publisher of The Guitar Magazine, may contact you with details of our products, services or to undertake research. Please tick here if you prefer not to receive such information by post ☐ phone ☐ email ☐.

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY DIRECT DEBIT

Originator's Identification Number 8 3 7 1 8 1

DIRECT Debit

1 Name of your Bank or Building Society

2 Name of account holder(s)

3 Branch sort code ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐

4 Account number ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

5 Instruction to your Bank/Building Society Please pay Anthem

Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Anthem Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature(s) Date

DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE

Direct Debit is only available in the UK. If you're not entirely satisfied with *The Guitar Magazine* at any time during your subscription, you can cancel it and receive a refund for any unmailed copies

SPECIAL RATES FOR INTERNATIONAL READERS

Save 40% on your international subscription.

☐ **Europe** €35.17 every 6 months by continuous card payment **save 40%**

☐ **USA/Canada** $41.83 every 6 months by continuous card payment **save 40%**

☐ **Australia** $59.40 every 6 months by continuous card payment **save 40%**

☐ **Rest of World** £26.95 every 6 months by continuous card payment

Please debit my card

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Maestro ☐ Am Ex

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Valid from ☐☐ ☐☐ Expiry date ☐☐ ☐☐ Issue no ☐☐

Signature(s) Date

Send your completed form to: **Freepost Anthem Publishing**
Yes it's that simple! (UK ONLY)

Offer ends **31 March 2018** Code **TGMP2906**

*40% saving is available on recurring payment method (Direct Debit or continuous card payment) orders only. You will pay the price listed above every 6 months saving 40% off the local cover price. All savings are based on the local cover price for UK, Europe, Australia and North America, and are available when you pay by continuous card payment only. You will receive 12 issues of The Guitar Magazine per year.

Great Reasons To Subscribe!

Save 40% on the shop price*

Get 12 issues per year

Pay just £17.96 on Direct Debit

Never miss an issue

Free delivery direct to your door

Not in the UK?

You won't miss out!

We offer subscriptions in a variety of currencies for your convenience so you can subscribe, too...

Europe €35.17 every 6 months

Australia $59.40 every 6 months

USA/Canada $41.83 every 6 months

Rest of world £26.95 every 6 months

For international orders go to **anthem-publishing.com/guitar** select your country and enter promotion code **TGMP2906**

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

The Guitar Magazine

Save 40%*

when you subscribe to The Guitar Magazine

3 easy ways to subscribe

anthem-publishing.com/guitar
Enter code **TGMP2906**

+44 (0)1371 853 609
Quoting code **TGMP2906**

Send Freepost
Complete the order form opposite

Ordering from the US or Canada? You can save 40% on your subscription and pay in US Dollars.

Joe Satriani

THE FIVE PIECES OF GEAR I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

As he returns with a brand new solo album, shred icon Joe Satriani sits down with **JOE BOSSO** to discuss the five pieces of guitar gear that he needs to get through the day...

It would be entirely accurate to call guitar legend Joe Satriani a gearhead – the studio in his Northern California home is a veritable music store full of axes, amps and effects of all kinds. But while Satch is the proud possessor of a wealth of vintage equipment, he draws the line at the notion that he's a purist.

"Being a purist always kind of confounded me," he says. "In some ways, when you say you're a 'purist', it's another way of limiting yourself to the possibilities that are out there. It's like saying, 'I'm not going to listen to something that's past the year 1958' or something.

"And people can be much the same way about gear," he continues. There's that mentality, 'if it's not vintage, I won't play it', which is kind of ridiculous, really. Because when you think about it, the people who made music in say, 1958, they were using stuff that was brand new. It was cutting edge for its time. Or even Hendrix. When he went to Manny's in New York, he bought himself brand-new Stratocasters. He was buying guitars that were of that time, and he created history with them."

Satch had something of a gear epiphany back in the late '70s when he moved to San Francisco and started teaching guitar at a music shop called Secondhand Guitars, which as the name suggests, was favoured by connoisseurs of vintage axes. "These customers would come in and they were only interested in things like 50s Strats and Les Pauls," he recalls. "I would play these guitars and sort of catalogue my impressions about what they were good for. I'd pick up a Broadcaster and go, 'Oh, that's why these guys like this for chicken picking.'"

At the same time, young budding guitarists like Kirk Hammett and Larry LaLonde were

taking lessons from Satch, and their minds were totally elsewhere. "They didn't want to know about those old guitars," Satriani says. "They had their new guitars and they wanted to do new things on them. It started to open my mind up, like, 'Okay, variety is really important'. I saw that both schools had validity to them. It was a really important step in my education about the kinds of guitars and equipment I wanted to use."

This desire to blend the best of old and new has fed into a lot of the equipment that Satriani relies on every day – here are five that he simply can't live without...

Ibanez Joe Satriani JS24 models

"I really do love my JS guitars, but if you told me I couldn't bring an Ibanez to a gig or something, I might go way back and say, 'Well, then I'd have to bring my '58 Fender Esquire,' as something totally different. Something like that sort of brings me back down to the essence of the electric guitar.

"Right now, though, I'm stuck on any of my JS 24-fret models, so one of those guitars would have to be number one. The 2410-MCO is the orange one. That guitar kicked off the alder wood muscle car thing. You can get a 2450 that's either purple or black, or you can get the new muscle car red, which is a 2480. The 248 actually also comes with the Sustainiac pickup in it.

> "I've written all this music, and it relies on a guitar that has fantastic playability, wonderful intonation and tuning stability"

"I can play anything on them – that's the main thing. I've written all this music, 30-plus years, and it relies on a guitar that has fantastic playability, wonderful intonation and tuning stability, along with vibrato bar and electronic options coming from the pickups and the controls. The modern models I play have a Sustainiac pickup in the neck position. To me, these are the ultimate Joe guitars.

"When you get right down to it, I'm playing around with wood and metal, so I've always wondered what kind of wood would allow the guitar to be more lively and resonant. After a couple of decades, we made the switch from basswood to alder, because I was looking for a tighter bass response and a smoother midrange. Alder really does seem to make a difference, especially when you're playing with lots of levels of gain, from crunchy all the way to super high gain. It seems to hold together quite well, and I really liked it in combination with the pickups, which were either the DiMarzio Satch tracks or what were eventually the Sustainiac pickups that I was putting in all my touring guitars.

"When it comes to my own guitars, I know that I'm playing a two-hour-plus show and I'm going from guitar to guitar, so I need consistency. I'm extremely hard on the guys at Ibanez to try to make the necks always the same. They do a really good job of trying to follow my fanatical desire, but I realise that one way to counteract the inevitable, which is the necks changing just a little bit here and there, is to create a fret profile that allows you to neutralise any kind of changing contour of the neck – the fretboard radius, the kinds of things that happen.

"My criteria is through the roof compared to the average guitar player out there, so what I've done is, I've slowly asked them

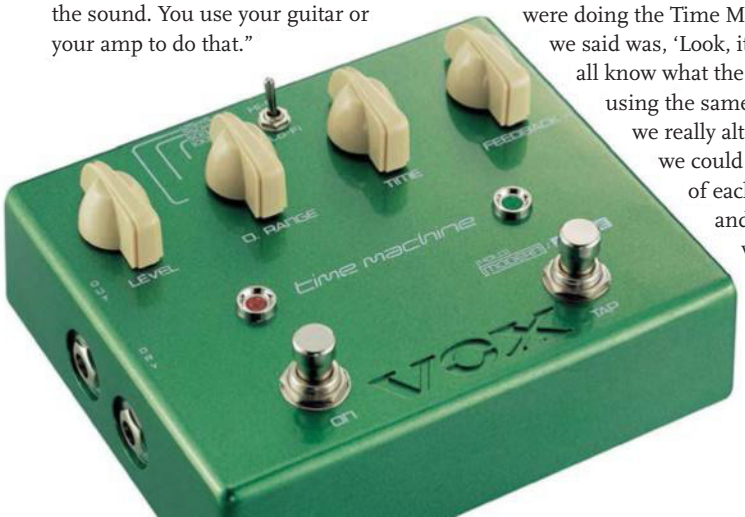
to increase the fret size, the height and the width, so that we can always dress the frets to create this consistency. The latest run of Ibanez guitars have larger frets, and they really makes such a great difference to me. I've done the last two years of touring with them, and they've really revolutionised my playing live. I think back to the years where I was struggling every time I picked up this guitar or that guitar, and I could never figure it out. I always thought it was the neck, but once I figured out, 'Wow. I can neutralise these changes simply by having these frets here,' it really made a big difference to me."

Custom Cables

"I use custom cables. We buy the parts from D'Addario/Planet Waves, but then we – or I should say Mike Manning, my guitar tech – cut them, stick on the jacks and put 'em all together. Any time we're together and we're talking about this project or that project, Mike will say, 'What do you need? I can make you six one-footers, six two-footers, a couple of three-footers, a 10-footer, a 20, a 30, a 40...'

"The vintage crowd has this whole thing about replicating the sound of yesteryear. They want to see an original guitar from whatever, 30 years ago, and they want to see a coil cord or some skinny little cord that's got a lot of resistance, which darkens the tone, basically. That's fine if that's the sound you're making, but that's never where I'm really going. I'm always pushing for the future. That's what I'm looking for.

"We finally realised that we don't need all these crazy cables to replicate an old sound. We need to be able to make the perfect length every single day, and when we're out on tour or we're in the studio, we don't want the cable to interact. We have an amp that's got a million controls on it. I've got a guitar that's got a tone control on it. We can deal with the tone, and so we got into using these Planet Waves cables that you make yourself. They're practically indestructible. I know that if I need a 30-foot cord or a 40-foot cord, it's not really going to make that much of a difference in the overall sound. If I think I'm losing a dB, I just turn up the volume a little bit, or if it gets a little dark, I just turn the treble up a little bit. You don't want the cable to affect the sound. You use your guitar or your amp to do that."



Vox Effects Pedals

"I love some of my old Vox pedals that aren't made anymore – the Satchurator, the Time Machine and the Big Bad Wah. Those are some top-of-the-line pedals that I use to create a lot of my melodies and solos.

"I love to play with different levels of gain, and the Satchurator's got that going. It's quiet, and you can plug it into almost any amp anywhere in the world and it'll give you that special thing that's so important. I can pick aggressively into it or I can just do a bunch of legato; whatever I do, it always comes out sounding very special. I love that pedal.

"That together with delay is probably my signature sound, and so the Time Machine was designed basically to create what we called a 'cascade'. Basically with delays – in particular, the old Echoplexes – the first repeat was really loud and then there was a drastic reduction in volume as each successive repeat came. Other delays would come out and they basically were different because they would change that slope. Until the Fractals came out, you were kind of stuck with the manufacturer, and so people would go crazy over the STE-1000 or something because it had this great slope. You'd hear delay but somehow it never got in the way of your next note, you know?

"The early Boss pedals were really great for that, but then they somehow got not great, and of course, as guitar players we're always looking for that great delay pedal. When we were doing the Time Machine, the first thing we said was, 'Look, it's a digital delay. We all know what the chips are. Everyone's using the same chips, but what can we really alter?' One of the things we could change was the slope of each successive repeat, and so we came up with what I thought was a very unique one, and it allows you not to have to set the volume of the repeat based on the first one being too loud. Which is generally what happens with these delays, so it's a more generous slope, and it allows you to have a little bit more feedback, which creates just a more dreamy sound.

"I still use the Big Bad Wah. I have too many wah pedals. I have buckets of these things – it's ridiculous. I still have the stash of the old Vox Big Bad Wahs. They're just so flexible. We took the iconic Vox wah and we made one little change. We made sure that the volume of your guitar didn't vanish during that certain little transition point, which was a characteristic of the famous Vox Wah.

"That sort of dynamic worked when you were playing through a Twin Reverb or something, but it didn't seem so attractive when you're playing into a high-gain Marshall or a Boogie. So we sort of filled it out. The Big Bad Wah has two potentiometers, so if you want, you can go to a modern potentiometer, like what you'd get with a Cry Baby, a modern Cry Baby, but you can also switch it if you want the tone accentuation to flip lower, like the old 535 from Dunlop. We trimmed it up and made it more useful, so it wouldn't feed back so much. It also has a drive control that you can use with either potentiometer.

"It's just so beautiful sounding. Every time I step on it, I go, 'This is just beautiful.' You can create so many tonal shapes and be so expressive with it. You can pick into it, so that's why I still use it."

D'Addario Planet Waves Joe Satriani Signature Straps

"I have this thing about straps and finishes. I love looking down at the guitar when I'm playing and it sort of like shoots some sort of information back at me. It's inspiring. Guitar straps for me are the same way. I've always felt that the strap had to say something a little something. I don't want to see my name in rhinestones or anything like that on it. I just want to see something kind of weird that reminds me to play something different tonight. When I got together with the guys

D'Addario they embraced the idea of putting some really weird images on the straps.

"Of course, we put them together so they looked good for the people in the audience. But my main desire as a player is that when I'm looking down at the strap it has to say something to me. It has to somehow inspire me to play, so we've done the crazy faces in lots of different colours.

"One of the things I said that probably surprised D'Addario was, 'Look, the strap needs to be able to slide around.' That's a pet peeve because I don't want the guitar to get stuck to my t-shirt or my jacket or something. I don't want to keep lifting my guitar up and adjusting my shirt all the time, just because I need to bring the neck closer for this technique or push the neck down for some other hand position. So I told the guys, "The strap needs to be able to slide around.' I change guitars a lot, and so I need to know that whatever I'm doing, the guitar has to always be in the right place.

"I didn't want to come up with just the one strap with my signature on it or something like that. I wanted them to almost be a series that would be sort of out of control, and the guys at D'Addario embraced that whole idea. We've got a black strap with olive green blobs, and we've got a blue/black/red crazy looking-thing with monster skulls cascading down. We've got lots of different things, and they all make me feel and play differently every time I'm playing."

Marshall JVM410HJS Joe Satriani Edition Head

"It really does help to have an amp! Without trying to toot my own horn, I have to say that my signature JVM pretty much sets me free. When I go to that overdrive channel and I get it into the red mode, I don't need anything else. I can play every song in my set and that amp, you can turn that up to 120 decibels and play 150 shows and it will never break down.

"I do have a lot of amps. In my studio, there are 10 Marshall 100-watt heads that are piled up. They range from 1969 all the way to the JVM410HJS, which has been my main amp for the last couple of years. Then there are some other funny ones around. There's a '57 reissue Fender Bandmaster, there's an Echopark Vibramatic... there's my old Wells amp, and then I've got vintage tweed amps, from Champ up to a Deluxe. Just in the studio alone, I've got a decade's worth of amp technology, some of which I can't even turn up in my house. It'd just be so loud.

"The thought is often, 'How can you distil all of those amps into one?' I know that with the JVM we tried to put the history of Marshall into one amp. I've always been sort of a champion of trying to get them to do that, and I'm not sure it can ever be done, because I have like, old tweed Fender Champs. They do what they do because that's all they do.

"So I never want to get rid of my other amps, because they do amazingly specialised things. But I do love my JVM, it's terrific. It's designed to really be responsive to the guitar's volume control, so I can get super Stratty clean, and then just turn up my volume and I've got that over-saturated Satriani sound for the melodies and solos. That's the way that we designed the amp, to do all of that."

> "With the JVM we tried to put the history of Marshall into one amp. I've always been sort of a champion of trying to get them to do that"

Joe Satriani's new album, *What Happens Next*, is out now on Legacy Recordings/Sony Music. The G3 UK Tour, featuring Joe Satriani, John Petrucci and Uli Jon Roth, starts 24 April

HEISTERCAMP

"GUITAR STRAPS DON'T COME BETTER THAN THIS!"

- THE GUITAR MAGAZINE

BESPOKE LEATHER BELTS & GUITAR STRAPS
WWW.HEISTERCAMP.CO.UK

INFO@HEISTERCAMP.CO.UK
01837 811722

HOUSE OF TONE PICKUPS

Hand wound pickups.
Let your ears decide.

www.houseoftonepickups.com
houseoftonepickups@gmail.com
+44 (0) 779 169 1251

houseoftone
houseoftoneuk

Andy Scott's '63 ES-335

© Getty Images

Block Buster!

Andy Scott's red ES-335 starred on the Sweet's remarkable string of glam hits in the early 1970s. Steve Clarke gets up-close with this storied Gibson and busts a few myths about it along the way...

Before *Ballroom Blitz*, *Teenage Rampage* and *Hell Raiser* lit up the charts, Sweet guitarist Andy Scott – then a member of Welsh psych-rockers The Elastic Band – saw Deep Purple's Ritchie Blackmore playing a Cherry '61 ES-335 fitted with a Bigbsy B5 and simply had to have one of his own. Scott's guitar – housed until recently at the British Music Experience in London's O2 Arena and now in residence at Liverpool's Cunard Building – was a '63 block-neck model purchased from a store in Manchester for the princely sum of £100 shortly before he joined the Sweet in 1970.

When Scott first encountered the instrument, it had a small battery-powered treble booster fitted where there's now a metal cap on the top of the lower cutaway. It delivered a driven tone but made the guitar feed back too much and was removed as a result. It was also speculated that the guitar had been assembled from two separate ES-335s, as it features two distinct serial numbers: one on the back of the headstock and another on the orange label inside the body. The story goes that this was because a fire had broken out in the warehouse of Barratts Music Shop, damaging two guitars but leaving one body and one neck unscathed.

No Smoke Without Fire?

To get to the bottom of this, we managed to track down Brian Higham, the former manager of Barratts, now retired and living on Anglesey in North Wales. "I worked there on and off from the late 50s to 1978" he recalls. "The fire was around 1967 or '68 and started in the drum shop on the corner of Oxford Road, and the guitars were at least 100 yards away, separated by a pub called The Oxford but part of the same building."

Brian insists that no guitars were involved in the fire but remembers one of the staff had to jump from the first floor window when the fire broke out. The fire even made the local press at the time. He also suggests that one of the staff may have mentioned the recent fire in an attempt to provide a prospective buyer with a credible story to explain the serial number discrepancy, before selling the guitar at the discounted price of £100. According to Brian, second-hand 335s would sell for anything between £100 and £125 in the late 60s. Will taking a closer look at the guitar reveal the truth?

Behind The Glass

We arrive at the Cunard Building at 7am and have roughly an hour to examine the ES-335 as it needs to be back under glass in time for the British Music Experience's 9am opening time. The guitar's outline is very much a

The Bigsby fitted on Andy's 335 is a B5, as opposed to the B7 units more commonly seen on Gibson semis

transitional example – not quite the full 'Mickey Mouse ears' of the earliest ES-335s but its horns aren't as narrow as they would become soon after. The Cherry finish has faded a little as expected, with a light maple figure visible through the translucent red.

The instrument's time under lock and key in London and Liverpool has helped preserve it, although it bears the scars of a headstock break that took place in 1978, when Scott spun around on stage in Australia and smashed it into the drum riser. Luthiers at Aussie guitar company Maton were responsible for the repair.

Inside the bass-side f-hole, the orange label is stamped with the serial number 120808, while the back of the headstock features serial number 121813. There could be several reasons for the discrepancy – simple human error is most likely, as the internal label would have been applied at a different stage in the production process to the headstock stamp. Someone may simply have typed the wrong number on the label.

It's not surprising that the instrument was first thought to have been made from two guitars as definitive information about Gibson's numbering system at the time is still hard to track down. On the headstock it looks like a couple of the numbers have been written on it with a ballpoint pen, probably when the headstock was rubbed down following the break. The original stamp is still clearly impressed, though.

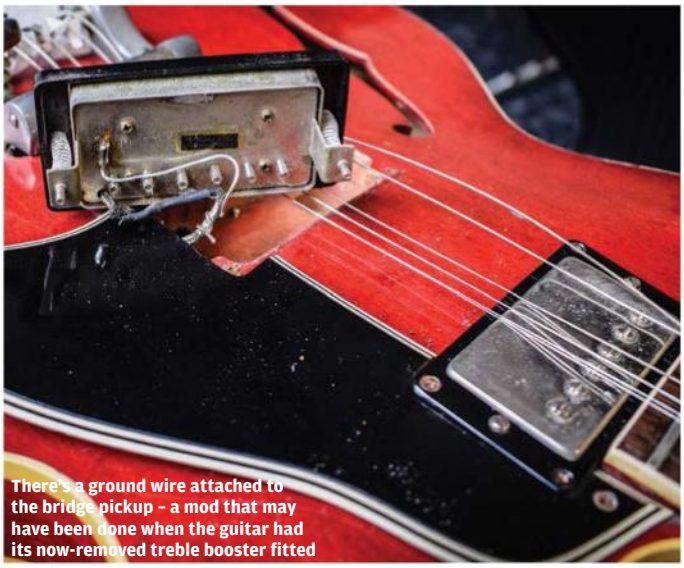
It bears the scars of a headstock break that took place in 1978, when Scott spun around on stage in Australia and smashed it into the drum riser

The respray on the neck is actually a much darker cherry than the rest of the guitar and the lacquer is quite thick, especially at the heel where it joins the body. Around 1973 a small white gouge in the black lacquer was visible just above the 's' on the Gibson logo but this was possibly corrected by a touch up during the Maton repair.

'Stock Answers

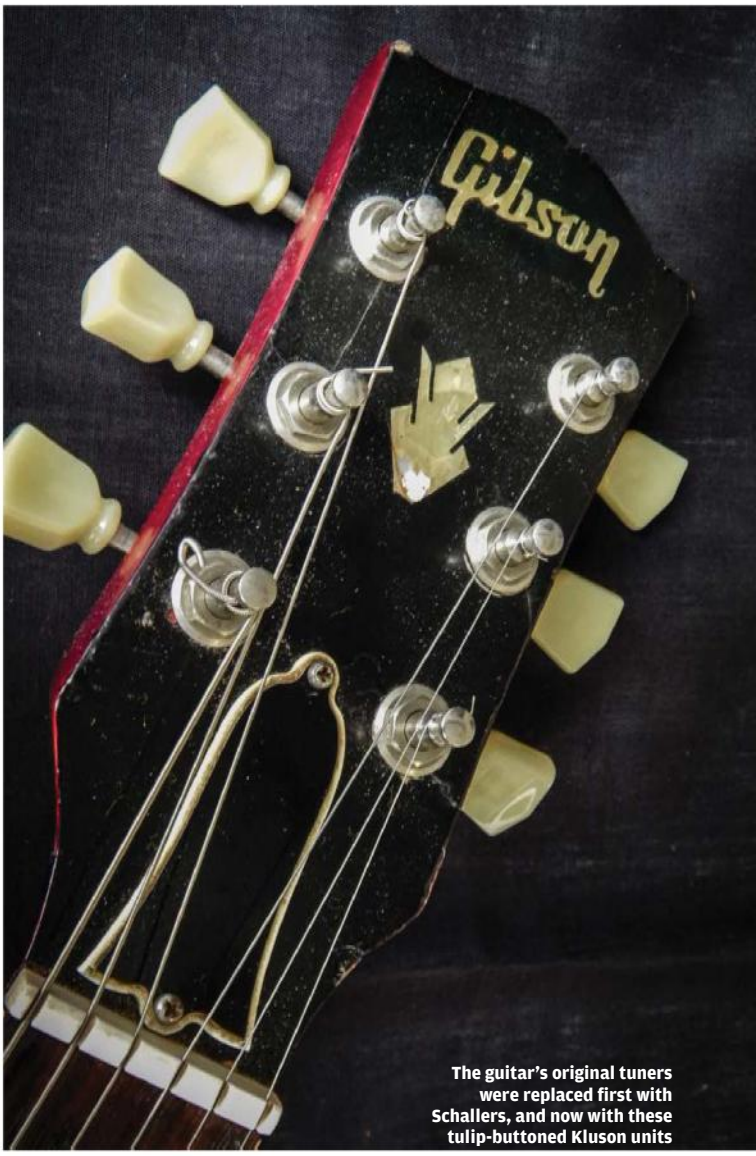
The thickness on the low E end is 13.84mm and at the D-string tuner it measures 14.27mm. The taper could at first seem to be the wrong way around but this would have been the result of sanding after the neck break in Australia. We find too much relief in the neck and take the opportunity to adjust the truss rod accordingly.

The guitar's machine heads are the Kluson plastic tulip type although these are not the originals. In 1971 the guitar still had the original double ring type Klusons that were introduced in late 1960, but by 1972 what look like metal button Schallers were fitted. The low E tuner casing on the back of the



There's a ground wire attached to the bridge pickup – a mod that may have been done when the guitar had its now-removed treble booster fitted

At some point a treble booster was added to the guitar, but it was removed and the hole was plugged



The guitar's original tuners were replaced first with Schallers, and now with these tulip-buttoned Kluson units

guitar today is coming away and slipping, as is the D tuner. The headstock has a 17 degree pitch, typical of Gibson's construction for the time, while its width at the top is 76.61mm.

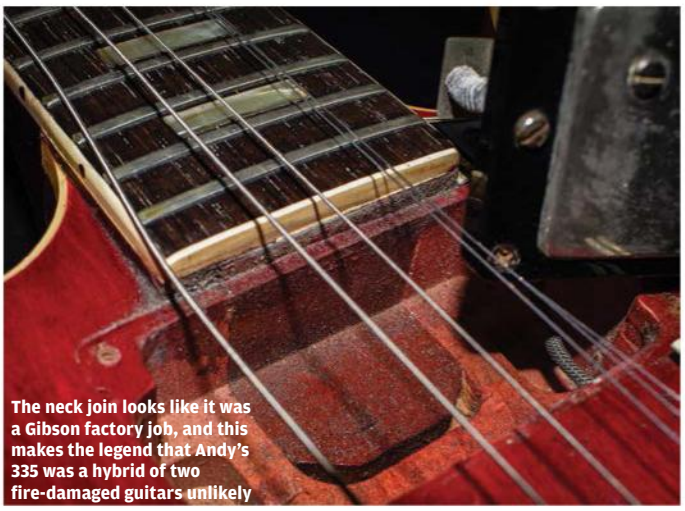
Right In The Neck

The neck is made of Honduras mahogany and the pearl inlay block markers are still a neat fit with no noticeable shrinkage. The fingerboard is generally in good condition and the Brazilian rosewood is smooth. Nonetheless we give it some oil as the 'board is somewhat dry. The neck is very slim and comfortable to play and you can see the Maton repair through the lacquer. The neck depth is 19.55mm at the first fret and 23.54mm at the 12th, while the neck width is 52.09mm at the 12th fret.

The bone nut is a replacement that measures 42.29mm in width and the slots are cut rather wide and deep. The first fret clearance is just about right but the gaps in the binding at the end of the fingerboard before it meets the nut show that shrinkage has occurred.

The headstock was damaged on stage in 1978 and you can still see evidence of the repair

Five of the ABR-1 bridge's saddles are nylon



The neck join looks like it was a Gibson factory job, and this makes the legend that Andy's 335 was a hybrid of two fire-damaged guitars unlikely

The case still has the Sweet's logo on it, as well as Andy Scott's signature

The frets measure 2.76mm, are non-original and much worn: every fret is flat and almost reminiscent of the 'Fretless Wonder' Les Pauls. Andy assures us that this helps him slide up the neck as there is no high fret wire to restrict movement. The binding has long since lost the nibs on the edge of the fingerboard, the action is very low and surprisingly there is no choking out.

Body Work

The thickness of the body is a comfortable 44.81mm. The Bigsby fitted to this guitar is a B5 rather than the traditional B7 – we actually like the look and most importantly, the tuning is stable. There's a small hole with a grounding wire coming out of it just in front of the unit – this goes under the area originally intended for a stop tailpiece.

If you look just behind the Bigsby on the surface of the guitar there are tiny dots in the lacquer and it is slightly duller in bright light. We're sure this is a reaction to a sticker that Andy placed there in about 1972 which stayed on for several years. The glue has reacted with the lacquer here but thankfully it has not penetrated right through. Incidentally, the sticker was an anti-smiley face with the word 'shit' written underneath it: it famously wasn't spotted by the cameramen when the band appeared on *Top Of The Pops*...

> Every fret is flat – Andy assures us that this helps him slide up the neck as there is no high wire to restrict movement

The guitar weighs in at 9.18lbs and the weight is very evenly distributed. The back of the instrument is in good condition with just two small patches of wear that look as though some touch up lacquer has been applied at some stage in the past. There are two small holes that look like additional strap buttons had once been fitted but they don't appear to have been in situ for long as there is no strap wear around the holes. The front of the guitar has lots of lacquer checking, especially around the f-holes, but the general condition is good overall. The guitar also features later '62-style reflector knobs – the upper section measures 17.61mm and the lower skirt is 26.1mm. The pots are Centralab units.

Under The Hood

We plug the guitar into a small Fender amp and there's no output, but a few blasts of switch cleaner bring the pots back to life. The controls are very noisy and the jack socket is intermittent but this is remedied by some very fine wet and dry paper on the end of a screwdriver (smaller than a quarter inch jack) inside the socket. After twisting it around several times, it's just enough to clean off the build-up of tarnish, eliminating the bad contact. The treble tone control doesn't work until we move a wire inside the f-hole to clear the short. Once fully

THE ALL NEW

RØDELink

PERFORMER KIT

COMPLETE DIGITAL WIRELESS MICROPHONE SYSTEM

Includes the new studio-grade RØDE TX-M2 Condenser Mic for incredible sounding live vocals, with the freedom to perform at up to 100m range* using license-free, easy-pairing digital wireless technology.

Premium sound, total freedom.

Includes:

- TX-M2 Wireless Condenser Microphone
- RX-DESK Wireless Receiver
- LB-1 Lithium-Ion Rechargeable Battery
- ZP2 Padded Zip Storage Pouch
- Micro USB Charging Cable
- RX-DESK DC Power Pack

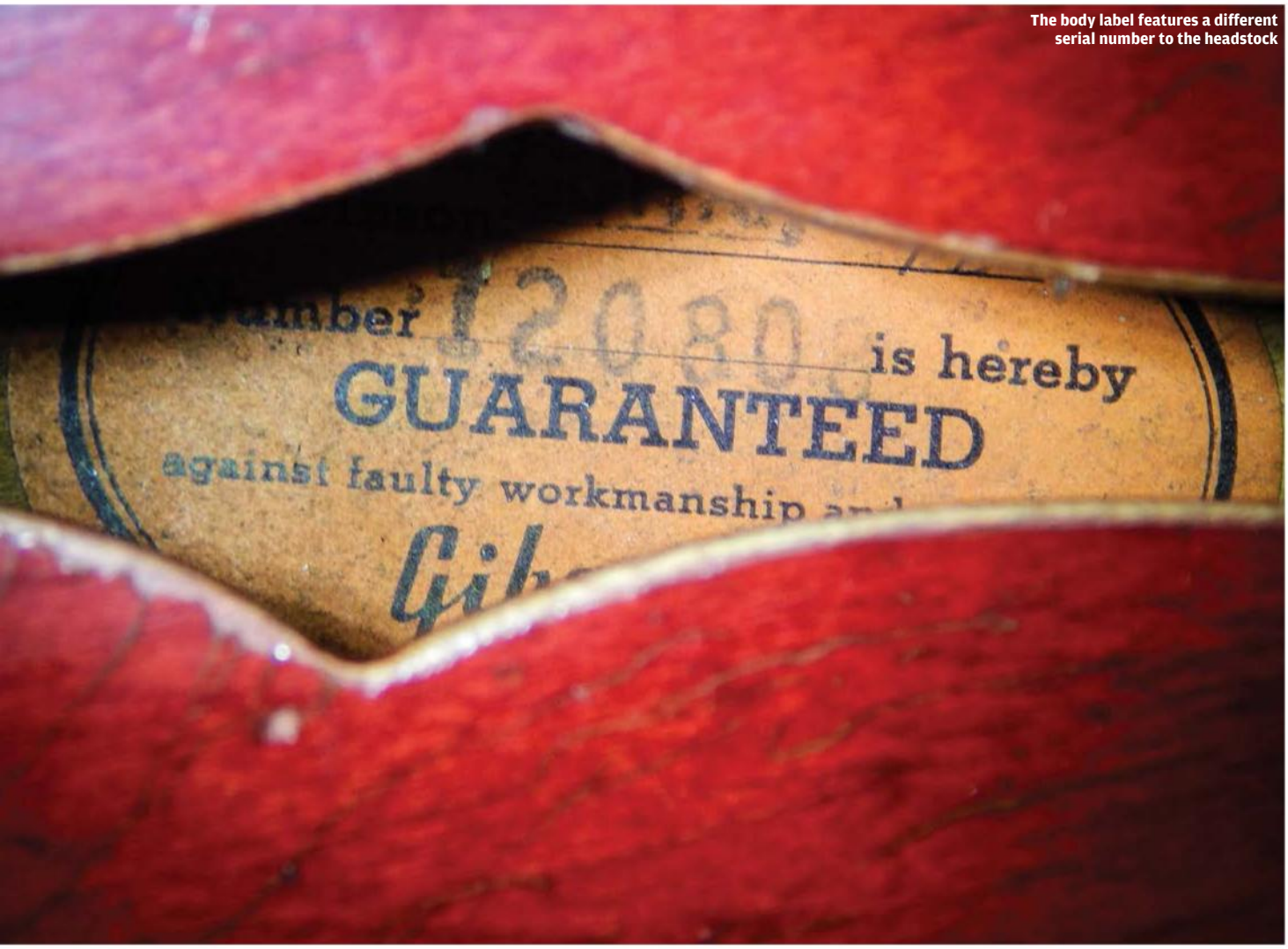
RØDE MICROPHONES

50 YEARS FREEDMAN ELECTRONICS 1967–2017

SOURCE

Exclusively distributed in the UK & Ireland by Source • www.sourcedistribution.co.uk/rode • T: 020 8962 5080

*Range estimations based on optimal environment



The body label features a different serial number to the headstock

functional, the tone controls have a lovely smooth taper.

Lifting out the neck pickup we take a reading of 8.34k ohms. The patent number sticker is missing from underneath but there's nothing alarming about that as they do sometimes come off. The pickup covers have never been removed, as the solder joints are very clean and there's no evidence of new solder. The other obvious clue that this has always been one guitar and not two is that the neck joint at the end of the fingerboard appears just as Gibson would have done the job originally. There is nothing to suggest any additional work has taken place.

The routing is very clean and the red lacquer just under the pickup surrounds (stamped M8 788) is slightly darker having not faded. The screws are also original. The bridge pickup gives a reading of 8.79k ohms and retains its patent number sticker. There's also a ground wire soldered to the pickup base but is not a Gibson spec. This may have been done when the treble booster was fitted, as its higher output and sensitivity would have increased noise. Once again the cover looks to be original and shows plenty of wear.

Pictures of this guitar from around 1971 show metal saddles on an ABR-1 bridge with no retaining wire. The bridge today has five nylon saddles, one metal one on the bottom E string and also a retaining wire. The threaded posts upon which the bridge sits are 72.88mm wide point to point: the bridge is 84.57mm wide and is a tight fit.

> The bridge pickup is bright with lots of top end harmonics, but flick to overdrive and it is a hellraiser: a hugely dynamic riff sound

Sweet Music Everywhere

Using our small Fender for testing, the bridge pickup is bright with lots of top end harmonics on a clean setting. Flick to overdrive and it is a hellraiser: no mud, just hugely dynamic and a perfect riff sound. The middle position has a lovely openness and the neck unit is a warm tone monster. Backing off the volume tames the attack but leaves a lovely edginess and makes for a really expressive sound.

To hear it for yourself, search online for video footage of Andy on Musikladen in 1974 playing *Sweet FA*, which not only demonstrates his ability and control over the Bigsby but the tonal variety that he achieved using this guitar.

If you delve deeper, beyond the band's hit singles, you'll hear just how wide a tonal range this guitar offered in Andy's capable hands. Behind the visual glitter of the glam era there was real substance and ability and The Sweet were undoubtedly a well-drilled band of accomplished musicians.

Special thanks to Kevin McManus and Olly Taylor at the BME and of course Andy Scott. Steve Clarke is an experienced guitar tech who can be contacted at famousfrets.com

FULLY LOADED

Packed with Features & Sounds that Defy Convention!

Multi-functional effect controls.

Control effect parameters and save expression snapshots for each built-in effect. (expression pedal sold separately)

Expanded controls to create stunning freeze effects, ethereal layers, fluid glissandos, infinite sustain and more.

External footswitch input.

Effects Loop lets you process the frozen signal through an external effects chain while preserving your dry signal.

Mode footswitch selects four unique Freeze functions, or a Live Effects mode.

11 footswitch activated effects can be used with the Synth Engine or independently.

10 awe-inspiring delay effects including the Deluxe Memory Man, Shimmer, Octave Delay and more.

5 to 3,000 milliseconds of delay time.

Secondary knob mode enables "hidden" parameters.

Tap Tempo with Tap Divide using built-in or external footswitch.

Internal Tails switch.

Built-in 62 second Looper.

Studio-grade stereo compressor.

Selectable hard/soft knee compression.

Selectable Limiter mode.

Swell control adjusts note fade-in and creates tape reverse effects.

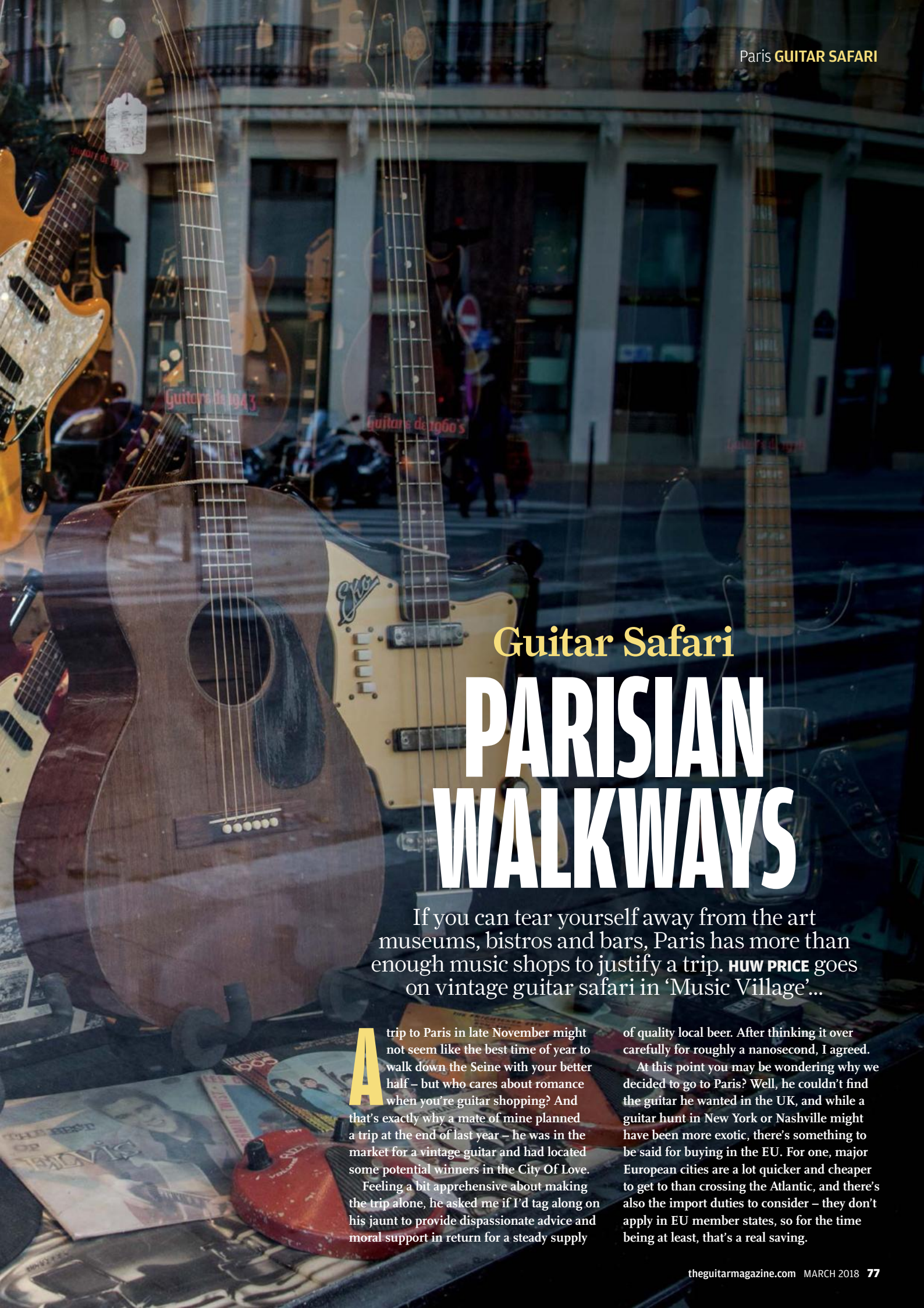
True stereo input/output.

Footswitch activated Overdrive with dedicated Volume, Tone and Gain controls.

electro-harmonix

WWW.EHX.COM

Guitare de 1965



Guitar Safari

PARISIAN WALKWAYS

If you can tear yourself away from the art museums, bistros and bars, Paris has more than enough music shops to justify a trip. **HUW PRICE** goes on vintage guitar safari in 'Music Village'...

A trip to Paris in late November might not seem like the best time of year to walk down the Seine with your better half – but who cares about romance when you're guitar shopping? And that's exactly why a mate of mine planned a trip at the end of last year – he was in the market for a vintage guitar and had located some potential winners in the City Of Love.

Feeling a bit apprehensive about making the trip alone, he asked me if I'd tag along on his jaunt to provide dispassionate advice and moral support in return for a steady supply of quality local beer. After thinking it over carefully for roughly a nanosecond, I agreed.

At this point you may be wondering why we decided to go to Paris? Well, he couldn't find the guitar he wanted in the UK, and while a guitar hunt in New York or Nashville might have been more exotic, there's something to be said for buying in the EU. For one, major European cities are a lot quicker and cheaper to get to than crossing the Atlantic, and there's also the import duties to consider – they don't apply in EU member states, so for the time being at least, that's a real saving.

1 Guitare Collection's store front is replete with lively vintage guitars

2 With just the right amount of lacquer checking this '56 Les Paul Junior is ready for gigging

3 Guitare Collection's owner is partial to Italian-made made Wandres, and seeing three together was a rare treat

4 Both these Mustangs were finished in Competition Orange but the bass has faded more than the guitar

5 Guitare Collection's stock of vintage acoustics included three mid-60s Gibsons and a '56 Martin

6 The 'Jazz Wall' highlights include two mid-50s ES-175s, a '49 Charlie Christian, a '52 Gretsch Synchromatic II and a 1960 Anniversary

7 This elegantly aged '62 Strat puts a smile on the face of shop manager Jeremy

8 All of the Fenders are organised by model and hang on the left wall of the shop

HOW TO GET THERE

We went with Flybe, but budget airlines fly to Charles De Gaulle from most UK airports. It's a short walk from the terminal to the train platform for Gare Du Nord, and you can be in the centre of Paris in around 30 minutes. Rue Victor-Massé is about 15 minutes from Gare Du Nord station and three minutes from Pigalle Metro on foot.

Getting there was the easy bit. Unfortunately, we were obliged to buy one-way tickets, because Flybe Airlines do not allow you to book seats for musical instruments unless they happen to be cellos, oddly. We were obliged to return via Eurostar and train, which added around seven hours to the journey.

Flybe claims its policy is based on safety legislation set by the Civil Aviation Authority, but our research suggests this is unlikely. So long as you pay for a seat, EasyJet, BMI Regional and RyanAir all allow guitar cases to be brought on board their flights. So, check with your airline before booking and if the guitar you want can't be disassembled and carried with your hand luggage, we'd advise choosing a different airline!

Additionally, CITES regulations make it problematic to bring guitars with rosewood parts from the US to the UK. If the rosewood is Brazilian, you run the risk of having your guitar impounded. None of the above applies if you're travelling within Europe.

The shops we were heading for are in Rue Victor-Massé in the 9th Arrondissement. The area, which also includes Rue de Douai and Fontaine, is known as 'Music Village', and entering from Rue Condorcet, things got very exciting very quickly. There is no aura of a place that has seen its glory days long past – this is a vibrant multifaceted sweet shop for musicians.

We say musicians because Music Village is more than just guitar shops – the boutiques in the area tend to specialise in a specific thing – and before we hit the main cluster of guitar shops, we'd already spotted a microphone shop (Le Microphone), a studio shop (Home Studio) and a drum shop (L'Atelier).

Even among guitar shops, some specialise further – so for example La Pédale deals exclusively in effects pedals while L'Ampli à Lampes is all about amps and valves. And we'll give you no prizes for guessing what kind of instruments Metal Guitars, Bass Center and Bass Maniac specialise in. There are also acoustic shops, including Acoustic System and the impressive Acoustic & Jazz.

For general purpose music shops with big name brands, the choice includes California, Centrale Guitars, Guitar Store, Le Gaucher, Cham Music and Guitar Legend. Given the number of shops in the area, we restricted ourselves to the four vintage-specialised shops to stop us from getting overwhelmed...

There is no aura of a place that has seen its glory days long past – this is a vibrant multi-faceted sweet shop for musicians

Guitare Collection

Rue Henry Monnier and Rue Frochot bisect Rue Victor-Massé and most of the cool guitar action happens to the west of the intersection. Guitare Collection is the first guitar shop on the right and we buzzed for entry. The owner may be getting on, but he still dresses like a rockstar – and pulls it off with typical Gallic flair. Shop manager Jeremy speaks perfect English, and made us very welcome.

The quality and quantity of vintage guitars is jaw dropping. There are no shortage of vintage Strats, Tele highlights include a '68 with factory-fitted Bigsby and a '69 Thinline, while a Candy Apple Red Jaguar butts horns with Custom Colour Mustangs.

Bassists are well catered for, as are fans of classic Gibsons, with the Les Pauls including a 1956 P-90/Staple Custom, a '53 Goldtop, a single-cut '56 Junior and a 1960 Special. You can also take your pick from four pre-1965 ES semis in Cherry and Sunbust.

Walking through the centre of the shop takes us past the acoustics, to the 'Jazz Wall'. If archtops are your thing you can try various Gibsons, Epiphones and Gretsches.

Apparently GC's owner was once friends with Salvador Dali, and you wonder if that influenced his taste, as he has some seriously strange vintage European stuff, including three Wandres from the owner's personal collection – reputedly the world's biggest.

Woodstore

A few doors down is Woodstore, and the vibe in here is far funkier and more chilled. Owner Julien provided coffee and people were constantly popping in to chat and hang out.

Woodstore has less stock than Guitare Collection, but it's similarly diverse. Basses are scarce, but Woodstore has a wider offset selection including a '65 12-string and an Olympic White Bass VI. It's also the only shop here a display of collectable vintage pedals.

Wandering around, you'll see a refinished '57 Strat hanging next to a '64 Candy Apple Red and a transition logo Seafoam Green. It's also not short of Gibsons, including a mid-50s Les Paul Custom, a Dot ES-335, a Trini Lopez and a '54 Goldtop. Not only is this my favourite shop on the street, it's one of the best guitar shops I've ever visited anywhere.

Point 2 Point

Point 2 Point was our next stop. It's more of a regular guitar shop – but with a ton of vintage in amongst newer guitars, pedals and amps. There's a mix of vintage Martin and Gibson acoustics, along with some great old electrics.

The vibe is more eclectic, and they even have a Martin GT66 – a guitar I'd never seen in the flesh before. Gibsons include a Melody Maker, Junior, a first year ES-175, a pair of ES-125s, a '64 ES-345 and ES-330 from 1965. One brand that does seem to be underrepresented in Paris is Gretsch, but we enjoyed trying out a 1960 6128 Duo Jet. P2P doesn't have the best selection of vintage Fenders either, but there is a clean Sunburst Strat and one of the prettiest Teles we've ever seen in Fiesta Red.

It's clear that P2P spend their money on guitars, not on lavish decor, but don't let that put you off as it contains some real gems. Manager Fred speaks good English and he was happy for us to try whatever we fancied.

The vibe in Point 2 Point is more eclectic, and they even have a Martin GT66 – a guitar I'd never seen in the flesh before

Vintage Guitar

Located a few doors down, this shop was our last stop and entering it was like stepping back in time. The first thing that hits you is the smell – it's like walking into a mouldy guitar case. The next throwback came from the owner, whose demeanour to us on entry could best be described as brusque.

Since Vintage Guitar's owner is an old jazzer, much of the stock includes semis and archtops. Vintage amps are scarce on this street, so it was good to see a Gibson EH185 and a GA40 on display. Here we also encountered our third dot-neck ES-335 of the day and our second Charlie Christian.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

We had a fantastic time hanging out on the Rue Victor-Massé, and we wholeheartedly recommend it to any musician who wants to spend a day immersing themselves in a cornucopia of beautiful instruments.

However, it's worth going in with the knowledge that the shop staff are understandably protective of their guitars, and they are experienced enough to distinguish between gawkers and genuine customers.

Bear that in mind when you're browsing – if you restrict yourself to trying only one or two guitars then nobody will mind.

If you are planning a trip, remember the shops open between 10am and 5pm with a two-hour lunch break – and timings are loosely adhered to. They're also closed Sundays and Mondays.

You won't find price tags on any of the vintage gear, so you'll have to ask. You can expect prices to be roughly comparable to what you'd pay in the UK, though as with any guitar shop, they're expecting you to haggle.

9 Shop assistant Alex holds two of Woodstore's vintage Telecasters – a 1962 Custom and a 1970

10 Custom colour vintage Strat fans would love this pair – a Candy Apple Red and seldom seen Sea Foam Green model

11 This collection of vintage Ibanez pedals includes an ultra-rare OD-9 overdrive made exclusively for the French market

12 Woodstore was the first shop that we visited on our trip around Music Village

13 This 1955 Les Paul Custom with a P-90 in the bridge and a Staple P-90 in the neck was one of three we found on Rue Victor-Massé

14 Although Recording King acoustics are now made in Asia, this 1940 example was probably made by Gibson

15 This transition logo Strat retained its vibrant sunburst and Fiesta Red is rare for a 1962 Tele

16 Point 2 Point is a large shop that features a variety of new and vintage instruments

17 Tucked inside Point 2 Point's soundproofed amp demo room we found this vintage Marshall amp and PA columns

18 The first thing we saw as we walked into Point 2 Point was this pre-CBS Jazzmaster on the counter being set up and re-strung for display

19 If quirky vintage semi-hollows are your thing, check out this 1960 Airline S-65 and rare 1966 Martin GT70

20 Vintage Guitars isn't the most modern shop inside or out, but there are some gems inside

21 Although Vintage Guitars tends to specialise in archtops, there were plenty of semis and fine solidbodies to choose from

22 Vintage Guitars described the finish on this 1932 National Duolian as 'Frosted Duco'

23 The handle probably can't be trusted, but this Gibson EH185 is otherwise in great shape

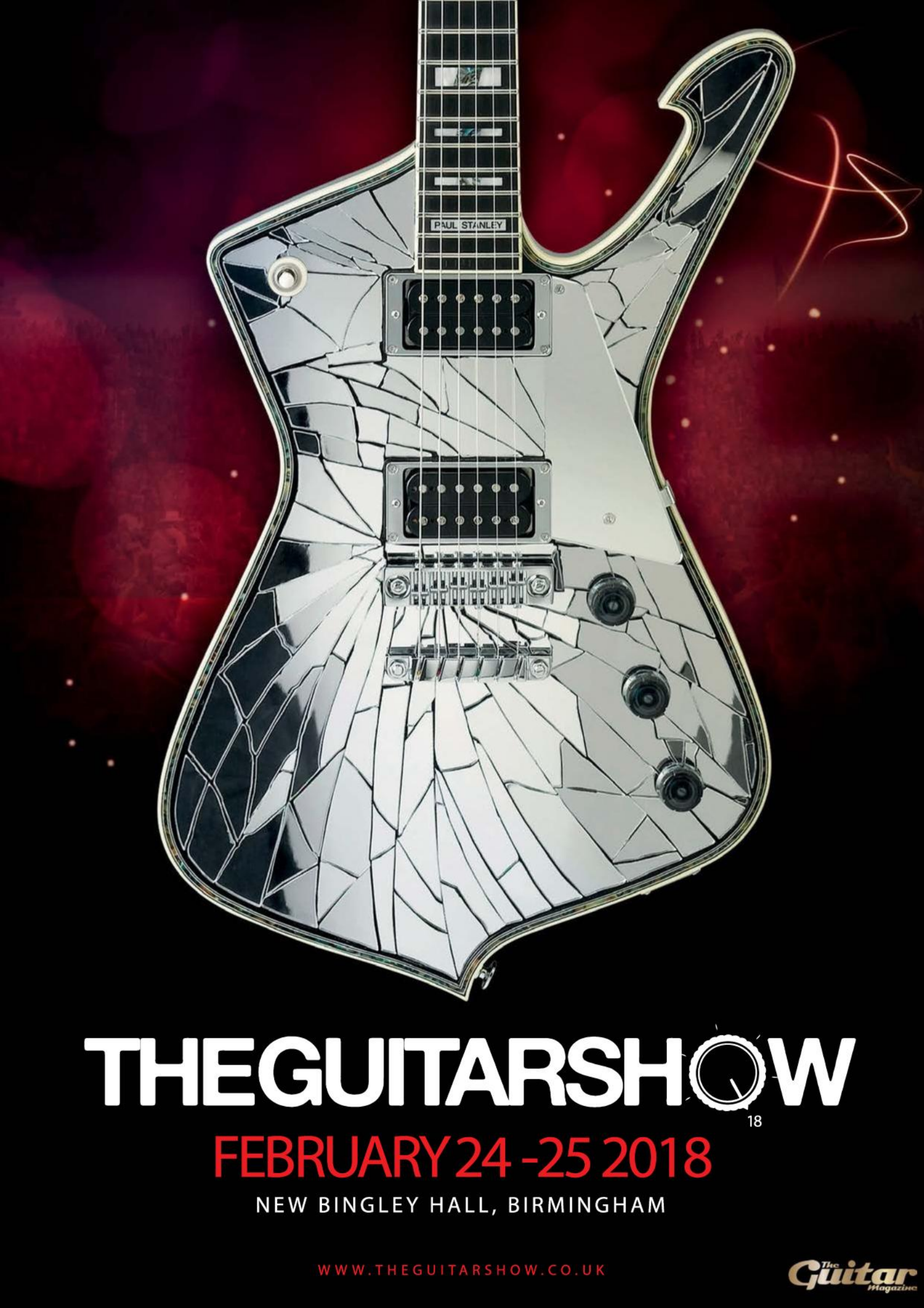
24 This refinished '57 Strat hangs in front of a 1975 model in original Olympic White

Strats include a transition logo Fiesta Red, a Sunburst and a refinished '57. Here we were informed that an early 60s slab board covered in brown varnish was 'stripped' rather than 'refinished' and as such, was worth more...

The highlight of Vintage Guitar for us was probably a D'Angelico New Yorker, but there are some fine Teles, an ES-330, an ES-125 and a very nice 1930s National amongst the treasures to be found.

If you're in the market for some lovely old instruments with a side-order of good ol' fashioned guitar shop condescension, then Vintage Guitar is the place to be. And while the owner did warm up after a while, all the other shops in Music City were simply too friendly, helpful and welcoming, so we soon beat a retreat.

My guitar-hunting travel partner eventually came away with the dream guitar he'd been hoping for when we first set foot on Rue Victor-Massé. While he'd understandably prefer us not to mention exactly what he came away with, I can heartily endorse an overseas guitar-shopping trip as a fine way to spend a day or so – you won't regret it!



THE GUITAR SHOW 18

FEBRUARY 24 -25 2018

NEW BINGLEY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

WWW.THEGUITARSHOW.CO.UK

The Guitar Magazine

RIVOLTA
MONDATA STANDARD

The second model from the Dennis Fano-designed Rivolta brand cranks up the 60s quirkiness, but **RICHARD PURVIS** finds a modern player hiding beneath the kitschy pearloid...

Sherwood? Inverness? Mystic Ocean Minty Pine Metallic? It's hard to pin down the exact shade of green we're looking at with this retro-tastic new model from Dennis Fano's Rivolta brand – but the website says... Laguna Blue. You're the boss, Dennis. To be fair, it's almost like a very mild kind of relic'ing, as it isn't too far from the emerald hue that Pelham Blue takes on after a few decades in the sun.

For the benefit of anyone who missed our review of the impressive Combinata model back in February 2017, Rivolta is a sub-brand set up by US boutique legend Dennis (formerly of Fano Guitars, now of Novo) to bring his designs to a wider audience through outsourcing the expensive bit – actually making the guitars – to the Eastwood factory in Korea. Yes, that price still has four digits in it, but it's way less than the £3,000-ish tag you'd pay for one of Fano's amazing US-built instruments.

While we're far from revolted by this Rivolta, it is also available in two less lurid shades for the more conservative plucker: a Firebird-style sunburst and a tasteful ivory white. But metallic green/blue/whatever is a good match for the styling of the guitar, which has a distinctly 60s, European vibe – not least in how much of the rosewood fretboard is given over to pearloid inlays. The chambered mahogany body is bound front and back, its front edges are accentuated by the same stylish German carve as is found on the Combinata, and there's a raised centre section that looks like another discreet Firebird reference (although it's a standard set neck rather than a through-body design).

From Hagstrom to Eko, 60s electrics from this side of the pond often had complex switching arrangements, and the three-pickup Mondata stays true to that tradition...

The Mondata is the anti-plank: a sophisticated guitar with loads of character that isn't easy to pigeonhole

but manages to keep things intuitive at the same time. As well as a standard three-way switch located on the upper bout, Les Paul style, there's another between the master volume and tone controls. This one's for choosing what to do with the middle pickup: leave it out entirely, blend it with whatever setting you've selected on the main switch, or hear it on its own. The pickups themselves are

KEY FEATURES

Rivolta Mondata Standard

- **PRICE** £1,187 (inc hard case)
- **DESCRIPTION** Chambered offset-body electric. Made in Korea
- **BUILD** Mahogany body with German carve and raised centre section; set maple neck with rosewood fingerboard; 24 medium jumbo frets
- **HARDWARE** Wilkinson vintage-style tuners, tune-o-matic bridge with nylon saddles, stop tailpiece
- **ELECTRICS** 3x Firebird pickups; 3-way selector switch plus 3-way mode switch, master volume & tone
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25"/635mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 43.5mm at nut, 51.9mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 23mm at first fret, 25.3mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 36mm at nut, 51mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 3.2kg/7.1lbs
- **FINISH** Laguna Blue (as reviewed), Fuoco Burst, Avorio White
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **CONTACT** Coda Music 01438 350815 **coda-music.com** **rivoltaguitars.com**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Sharing some of the Mondata's vintage European styling is the **Italia Modena Challenge** (**£879**), with three mini-humbuckers and a Bigsby. The **Eastwood Airline '59 3P** (**£1,096**) goes even bigger on retro quirkiness, while a generous hike in budget brings us the **Deimel Firestar Custom** (**£3,650**), a German-made Jazzmaster/Firebird hybrid with added piezo sounds

Firebird types, described by Rivolta as "humbuckers that sound like fat single-coils".

The medium C-profile neck is maple, with a 25-inch scale and no less than 24 frets. Its asymmetrical headstock reminds us of another Euro revivalist name – Trevor Wilkinson's Italia brand – and the Deluxe-style tuners attached to it are in fact Wilkinson-made. Build quality all round looks good, even if nose-to-the-paint scrutiny reveals a couple of finishing imperfections in the area where neck meets body.

In Use

If you've ever found Firebird pickups a little too bright and skinny, the Mondata is here to gather up your preconceptions for recycling. Everything this guitar does has a full-frequency hi-fi quality that belies its pawn shop looks. All three pickups are on the powerful side, and while the bridge unit is the most 'retro' in terms of top-end bite and Gretschy twang, it retains plenty of body and never gets nasal.

Switching to bridge and neck (with the middle pickup staying on the subs' bench for now), the cluckiness that comes through has a whiff of Rickenbacker 360 about it, aided perhaps by the sweetening effect of the chambered build. So by the time we get to the neck unit on its own, the jazzy smoothness it produces comes as less of a surprise. The only letdown is the tone control: it does very little until it's all the way down to about three, then falls off a cliff into murky bemufflement.

Flicking the second switch to the centre gives us three new sounds – and while two of them are familiar enough, adding phase-cancelling quack of precisely the same kind you get from positions two and four on a Strat, it's the third that's arguably more interesting. This is all three pickups on together, and while some of that quackiness is retained, it's much less pronounced; the result is an altogether gentler voice that still has enough harmonic complexity to make it potentially very useful.

Everything this guitar does has a full-frequency hi-fi quality that belies its pawn shop looks

Option three on the second switch, then, is the middle pickup on its own. This setting overrides the main pickup selector, which feels a bit odd at first, but you'll get over that if the sound is good enough. Luckily, it is: in overall timbre it's not so far away from the other two pups combined, but with less phasey chime and more midrange bite.

Crank up the gain and this pickup really comes into its own, with a tightness that makes it better suited to overdriven chords than any of the combination settings. Still, while it will serve up clear and cutting lead lines in any of its seven positions, the Mondata is perhaps not a rock guitar at heart. We'll stop short of using the dreaded word 'polite', but there is a balance about all of its many voices that might leave you pining for the ragged aggression of an SG when it's time to start pulling your solo face.

Ultimately, this is the anti-plank: a sophisticated guitar with loads of character that isn't easy to pigeonhole. If your playing style is a match for that description, and you don't demand the snappy immediacy of a throw-around solidbody, it could be the perfect instrument to chase your blues – or greens – away.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Wide range of high-class tones
+ Unique styling falls just the right side of kitsch
+ Much cheaper than a US-made equivalent Dennis Fano design

– Attention to detail isn't quite at boutique level

A smart and versatile guitar that has the tonal chops to match its distinctive retro looks

9/10

STRONGER. FOR LONGER.

LEGENDARY TONE • SUPERIOR BREAK RESISTANCE • UNPARALLELED DURABILITY

AVAILABLE NOW

ERNIE BALL®

ernieball.co.uk/paradigm

VIGIER
EXPERT CLASSIC ROCK

A new model that combines classic 60s tones with up-to-date spec. **SIMON BRADLEY** makes sense of it all...

Recently introduced into French company Viger's Expert range of SSS-loaded double-cuts is the Classic Rock, an S-type built for modern times that provides the classic tones players hanker after without the assumed downsides of traditional fixtures and fittings. Alongside the long-established 10/90 neck that incorporates a strip of carbon in place of a truss rod, the spec includes high-mass locking machines, the 2011 vibrato that pivots on ball bearings, and string trees imaginatively fashioned from string ballends. Also behind the Teflon nut sits a small strip of dampening material intended to reduce any unwanted string over-ring when using high-gain tones.

Pickups comprise hand-wound single coils from Amber, a boutique manufacturer based just outside the town of Ribnitz on Germany's Baltic coast. Dubbed True-Vintage, the units are built around alnico V magnets and are specifically intended to pay homage to those acclaimed late 1960s tones. The centre pickup is reverse wound with position three of the standard five-way selecting the bridge and neck in parallel rather than the solo'd middle coil and, needless to say, positions two and four, which combine the reversed middle with the bridge and neck respectively, are hum-cancelling.

In Use

Strapped on the Expert is nicely balanced and weighs just about the same as an American Standard Strat. The slinky neck is seductively smooth and a joy to play, and if just you can't get on with the default zero fret it is, we're assured, easily removed.

The tonal performance is focused, comprising pleasantly tight highs and roundly woody mids and lows, with the middle selection providing a sound that errs on the warm side while still demonstrating sufficiently glassy treble. The all-important vintage character is just about apparent and although the Expert can rock with ease the fragile treble allows it to excel when used cleanly; position four is especially worthy of mention in this regard.

The tonal performance is focussed, comprising pleasantly tight highs and roundly woody mids and lows

The spec also includes a side-mounted Neutrik locking input socket and while we understand the reasons for its inclusion, we do feel that it makes removing the lead a convoluted process. Our right-angled jack obscures the release tab, too, and we also find that considerable pressure needs to be applied to it to disengage the lock; possibly a case of Vigier gilding the lily?

The stability of the neck is such that we were able to change from 0.09 to 0.010-gauge strings without any movement, and we find it to be ideally set for accurate intonation all the way along its length. It plays beautifully, too, and although the Expert can sound like a late 60s Strat it certainly doesn't feel like one, something we feel will gratify Vigier no end.

With a slew of options including pertinent alternatives when it comes to specifications and finishes, it seems that Vigier has most bases covered. It may not be a snip at £2,269 but make no mistake; the Expert Classic Rock is a high-quality, modern instrument that's well worth considering.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Innovative construction
+ Excellent and varied tones
+ Gorgeous, stable neck
+ Wide selection of custom options

– It's on the pricey side
– Fiddly locking jack input

The excellent playability and versatile tones – all augmented by a raft of modern features – make the Expert a guitar to be reckoned with

8/10

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

With multiple tones available from its S-1 Switching system, **Fender's Elite Strat** (**from £1,799**) is the ideal workhorse. For an irresistible custom vibe check out the **Suhr Classic Antique** (**from around £2,599**) complete with a hum-cancelling system, while **Godin**'s **Progression Plus** (**£849**) also mixes a high-quality build with myriad switching options

KEY FEATURES

Vigier Expert Classic Rock

- **PRICE** £2,269 (w/ hard case)
- **DESCRIPTION** Double-cut, solidbody electric. Made in France
- **BUILD** Centre-joined solid aged alder, with bolt-on D-shape maple neck reinforced with carbon, matte finish. Maple fingerboard, 300mm radius. 22 medium stainless steel frets plus hardened, removable zero fret, Teflon nut, string dampening strip
- **HARDWARE** Vigier 2011 vibrato, locking machineheads, all chrome
- **ELECTRICS** Three Amber True-Vintage single coils, volume, tone, five-way lever selector and Neutrik locking input socket
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.6"/650mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 42mm at nut, 52mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 19.5mm at first fret, 23mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35mm at nut, 53mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 8.1lbs/3.7kg
- **FINISH** Normandie blue (as reviewed) – myriad other colour options available, but metal finishes add £256, clear black and pearl white add £397. For a custom Rock Art finish add £897. All finishes can be matted at no additional charge
- **OPTIONS** Rosewood fingerboard (no charge), black or gold hardware (£153 or £247), Killswitch (£138), custom strap-locks (£52).
- **RANGE OPTIONS** The DiMarzio-loaded expert Classic Rock, Expert Retro '54 and Expert Standard '63 (from £2,269) The Expert Texas Blues starts at £2,359
- **LEFT-HANDERS** Only the Excalibur Special (£2,629) and Indus (£2,149)
- **CONTACT** High Tech Distribution 01722 410002 **vigierguitars.com**

SHERGOLD
MASQUERADER SM04-SD

A new addition to the recently revitalised UK brand with an intentionally moody look and dark tones. **SIMON BRADLEY** grabs a torch...

We covered the original trio of incumbents of the Shergold Masquerader range last year in *The Guitar Magazine* and found ourselves smitten by their dulcet charms. Designed by Patrick James Eggle, a UK builder whose reputation is as good as the varied guitars he designs, the one omission from the original production run was a guitar sporting a neck-loaded humbucker: lo and behold, this new SM04 offers a Seymour Duncan SH-1 '59 to complement the bridge-loaded TB-4 JB Trembucker. They're controlled by master volume and tone pots, and beneath the latter lurks a push/pull split that solos the inner coils of both pickups.

That's not all to change, as the SM04 is also the first of the new Masqueraders to offer not only a mahogany neck but also an ebony fretboard and while we were at first somewhat saddened to see that the hand-burnished rosewood had been replaced, the slight change of spec does make sense.

Fear not, as the sumptuous feel of the neck that we were so taken by in the first group of Shergolds we took a look at hasn't been compromised in any way, and the finishing is as good as we remember. The colour of the mahogany employed here

is more brown than red, while the ebony demonstrates some subtle yet attractive graining. The hand-inlaid aluminium line fret markers are also still present, and while we still have our original misgivings, they do, as Patrick told us last year, look "cool and different".

We won't waste time here going over the story of the original Shergold guitars and the story of their rebirth thanks to Patrick and distributor Barnes & Mullins – if you want to remind yourself, check out the July 2017 issue of *The Guitar Magazine*, or look up the review on theguitarmagazine.com.

In Use

The combination of a mahogany neck and body produces a dark and sumptuous tone, and although the ebony will temper the low end to a degree, this guitar is built to rock, and rock it most certainly does. With a DC resistance of 17.4k, the TB-4 is up there with the hottest of Seymour's passive alnico V pickups, and the edge this provides to the colossal hard rock tone is certainly required to alleviate any threat of tonal mush.

Dialling in a warmly overdriving blues sound and flicking to the neck pickup gives a tone that's more Joe Perry than Clapton while being tighter than either, and it's only when winding up the wick in this scenario that we feel we need to adjust the treble to help counteract the effects of the mahogany. Engaging the coil-split also helps no end, giving a tone reminiscent of some of the more recent Manic Street Preachers songs.

The SM04 finds its voice when you open the taps. Even with maximum gain, the tone remains full and rich

However, the SM04 finds its true voice when you really open the taps and cut loose. Even with maximum gain wrung from our selection of Blackstar, Marshall and Hughes & Kettner test amps, the tone remains full, rich and, most vitally, distinct and full of character. Job done, it would seem.

As with its siblings, the SM04 certainly offers something new. The classic 70s vibe is nicely counterbalanced by its enormous tone and, needless to say, its neck feels very special indeed. If you're inclined to rock yet hanker after something slightly removed from the norm in both vibe and performance, this could well be it.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The **Gibson SG** is surely the ultimate rock double-cut and the **2018 Standard** (**from £1,299**) continues the fine tradition. They don't come much darker than **Schechter's Demon S-II Custom** (**£895**), complete with a mahogany body and hot Schechter 'buckers, or try the **PRS SE Custom 24** (**from £799**) that mixes sheer class with a superb tone and performance

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Massive rock tones
+ Quality neck
+ Impressive performance

– Only available in black
– Case is extra

With a lovely neck, a striking look and a brace of huge tones that are ideally suited to rock and metal, this is a great addition to an impressive range

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Shergold Masquerader SM04-SD

- **PRICE** £799
- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody electric guitar. Manufactured in Indonesia, set-up in the UK
- **BUILD** Mahogany body with high-gloss polyurethane finish and Bakelite scratchplate; bolt-on solid mahogany neck with hand burnished satin finish; ebony fingerboard with a 305mm/12-inch radius; 22 medium-jumbo nickel frets and hand-inlaid aluminium fret and side position markers; Shergold Custom T bridge with compensated brass saddles; GraphTech Tusq nut; locking tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Seymour Duncan TB-4 JB Trembucker (bridge), and SH-1 '59 (neck)
- **CONTROLS** Volume and tone A500k pots; master push/pull coil split; three-way blade selector
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **SCALE LENGTH** 648mm/25.5"
- **NECK WIDTH** Nut 42.5mm; 12th fret 52mm
- **NECK DEPTH** First fret 24mm; 12th fret 25mm
- **STRING SPACING** Nut 36mm; bridge 53.5mm
- **WEIGHT** 3.18kgs/7lbs
- **FINISH** Thru-Black only
- **CONTACT** Barnes & Mullins 01691 652449 **www.shergoldguitars.com**

BREEDLOVE
FRONTIER CONCERTO E

Breedlove's Concerto body shape was designed to match the tonal punch of a dreadnought, but be more comfortable to play. **JAMES STEVENS** explores an all-mahogany version

There was a time – and it was only a few years ago – when Breedlove was America's third best-selling flat-top acoustic manufacturer. As such, Breedlove were the 'best of the rest' behind the giants of Martin and Taylor. Since then, the acoustic market has changed significantly, but despite not being as widely available in the UK as the aforementioned mega-brands, Breedlove has continued to quietly go about its business, producing high-quality guitars, and winning awards and admirers along the way.

Unlike many high-end manufacturers, Breedlove makes the decision to never replicate the existing body shapes and designs of its longer-established competitors. Therefore, you'll not find a 'standard' dreadnought, jumbo or OM within its range. Rather, the company's R&D focuses initially on player comfort, "It's all about the shape that feels right against your body", state Breedlove. Finding the right tonal voice comes after finding the right body shape.

The Concerto body shape of our review model has an interesting back story. Breedlove challenged itself to better the tonal performance of a dreadnought, but do so with a more comfortable body design.

In reality, the Concerto's dimensions are closer to that of a jumbo-sized guitar with the lower bout measuring just shy of 16 inches. At its widest, the upper bout measures 11.5 inches, which is closer to that of a regular dreadnought, with a waist of 9.25 inches, more akin to that of an OM shape. Running the rule over the key dimensions, the Concerto is something of a hybrid design of a jumbo, dreadnought and OM. That said, depending on who you listen to, some luthiers will tell you that the variations in 'standard' measurements can be compensated for by employing high-quality tonewoods in its construction.

Breedlove challenged itself to better the tone of a dreadnought, but do so with a more comfortable body design

Straight out of the deluxe hard case (equipped with five clasps, one lockable), the Concerto is noticeable due to its understated, almost simple, appearance. With no elaborate inlays, fancy pickguard or intricate bindings, this Breedlove's decorative cupboard is pretty bare. This suggests that the considerable price tag is due to the use of high-quality tonewoods and the painstaking, hand craftsmanship.

The Concerto is an all-solid, all-mahogany guitar. The guitar's soundboard is an exquisite cut, full of figure and grain pattern, and flawlessly bookmatched. Although we can't be 100 per cent sure, the back appears to be a slice of the same slab of Honduran mahogany used

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

At this sort of price point, most builders will be able to offer a custom shop/built to order guitar, designed to your specification, but starting points could be **Taylor's 600 electros**, which generally come in around **£2,900** or **Martin's Performing Artist series** of guitars, again around **£3,000**. Alternatively, with a budget of **£3,000**, the smaller, workshop luthiers such as **Alister Atkin, Roger Bucknall (Fylde Guitars)** or **Patrick James Eggle** would certainly be worth investigation

Digging in and strumming with vigour doesn't cause the tone to break up – the headroom is truly awesome

for the top, which gives the guitar's body a mirror-like appearance. Both the top and the back of the guitar are edged with aged ivoroid binding that has been fitted skilfully. As has a polyurethane gloss finish that's as good as you'll see on any guitar, at any price point – four layers sit atop four layers of sealer. The one-piece mahogany, low profile neck is hand-rubbed into a super-smooth feeling semi-gloss finish. In truth, the shape and sleek feel of this neck profile is possibly the most comfortable and easy to play this reviewer has ever come across.

The soundhole rosette is inlaid with abalone. If you were being ultra-picky (and using a microscope), you could point a tiny gap of less than a millimetre where the two ends of the inlay strip meet, but even to mention it is bordering on harsh.

Both the fretboard and bridge are formed from African ebony, the latter being a through-string, thereby removing the need for bridge pins and resulting in a much cleaner, sharper looking arrangement. Some argue that not anchoring strings through the body with bridge pins sacrifices some of the tone, but our experience is that, if that is the case, it's certainly not detectable to the human ear. The fretboard is home to 20 perfectly finished, medium-sized frets and centred, inlaid, position dot markers.

The ebony-faced headstock is again beautifully finished, and features Breedlove-branded, nickel tuners with ebony buttons. It's a matter of taste but, while there's nothing wrong with the tuners that are fitted, we can't shake the feeling that a premium set of open-geared Waverly tuners would have been more in keeping with guitar of such high quality.

Our review model comes loaded with LR Baggs EAS (Element Active System) VTC (Volume Control System) electronics, which features an under-saddle transducer and a Class A endpin preamp (which, by the way, makes this system well-suited to retro installations). The nine-volt battery that powers the unit is housed within a small pouch and Velcro'd to the inside of the guitar's back. Access to it isn't easy unless you remove the strings, but with 1,000 hours of battery life, it's not something you'll have to do often. Volume and tone controls sit discretely just inside the bass side of the soundhole. Mid-song adjustments can be tricky, but if you're a set 'n' go type player, these types of controls are just fine.

Overall, the Concerto E is a fantastically well-made guitar. Build quality, materials and presentation range from excellent to exceptional, and this example is evidence that Breedlove absolutely knows how to produce high-end instruments and justify the potentially eye-watering price tag.

In Use

Having been so impressed thus far, we have high expectations for the tonal performance of the Concerto – and, boy, we're not disappointed. If we had to some it up in one word, it would be stunning.

Starting with some basic fingerstyle, what is particularly striking is the Concerto's bottom end. Coming from deep within the bowels of the guitar comes a full-bodied, earthy rumble that never breaks up no matter how hard it's pushed. The midrange is plump, rounded and full of textures, while the higher registers sing out with a clear, defined and glassy ring that encourages refined and 'less-is-more' playing. Play a bass note with your thumb and pick two or three strings over the top and an orchestral timbre issues forth. When plucked with a little more strength, it sounds like someone is rolling up an invisible volume control.

Reaching for a pick and strumming first position chords opens up a world of resonance and harmonics. Really digging in and strumming with vigour doesn't cause the Concerto's tone to break up – the available headroom is truly awesome.

The Breedlove comes fitted with 0.013-gauge strings, and these are no doubt needed to really drive the guitar and get the best resonance out of the soundboard. As such, we'd suggest it would be a mistake to fit lighter strings, which means the guitar is perhaps not the best choice for solos incorporating lots of string-bends.

Plugging the guitar into our house Schertler David with tone controls set flat produces a similarly inspiring and remarkable tone. Roll in a touch of reverb, close your eyes and you could be filling a large auditorium.

Whatever the style of playing, or genre of music, we can't help but be seduced by the overall richness and musicality of both the Concerto's acoustic and amplified performance. Regarding Breedlove's mission to improve on a dreadnought's tone, we'd suggest that the company has achieved that target – it's just a shame we have to give it back! Impressive stuff.

KEY FEATURES

Breedlove Frontier Concerto E

PRICE £3,049 (inc hard case)
DESCRIPTION Electro-acoustic guitar. Made in USA
BUILD All-solid, all-mahogany body finished in high gloss. One-piece semi-gloss mahogany neck with ebony fingerboard and bridge, and aged ivoroid binding
HARDWARE Breedlove branded enclosed nickel tuners with ebony buttons
ELECTRICS LR Baggs EAS VTC
SCALE LENGTH 25.5"/648mm
NECK WIDTH 45mm at nut, 56mm at 14th fret
NECK DEPTH 24mm at nut, 24mm at 9th fret
STRING SPACING 39mm at nut, 58mm at bridge
WEIGHT 2.10kg/4.63lbs
FINISH Full gloss body, satin neck
LEFT-HANDERS Yes (to order)
CONTACT Rosetti
01376 550033
www.rosetti.co.uk
www.breedlovemusic.com

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Flawless build-quality and top-drawer tonewoods
+ Exceptional finish and presentation
+ Truly head-turningly good tones – both acoustically and amplified

- The soundhole controls will not be to everyone's taste
- £3,000 is a lot of anyone's money

A hugely impressive and individual take on the dreadnought formula that offers superb tone and playability

9/10

A choice of three H9 pedals to suit your needs and budget.

H9 Core
Pre-loaded with 25 presets from the H910 / H949 original studio harmonizers. Our most affordable H9.

H9
Pre-loaded with 9 effect algorithms and 99 presets. The 'Greatest Hits' version.

H9 Max
Pre-loaded with 47 algorithms and over 500 presets available. Also includes all future algorithm releases. For players that want it all!

One Pedal to Rule Them All

Every guitar pedal you'll ever need in one compact unit, the H9 Harmonizer® is full of Eventide's iconic studio-quality reverb, chorus, delay, modulation and pitch-shifting effects. A simple, one-knob user interface allows easy effect editing and preset selection while two onboard footswitches let you change presets, tap tempo, and bypass during live performance. There's real-time MIDI control and inputs for an expression pedal and AUX footswitch, and a free H9 Control app lets you create set lists, edit and manage presets wirelessly via Bluetooth.

Find out more at **eventideaudio.com**

Eventide®

SOURCE

Exclusively distributed in the UK & Ireland by Source • T: 020 8962 5080 • W: sourcedistribution.co.uk/eventide

facebook.com/sourcedistribution twitter.com/sourcedist

Fender
HOT ROD DELUXE

FENDER
HOT ROD DELUXE IV & HOT ROD DEVILLE IV

Fender Hot Rods have been around for over 20 years, and 2018 sees the fourth generation hit the streets. **HUW PRICE** tests the latest versions of two of the world's most popular amps

It's strange that Fender's Hot Rods never seem to feature on anybody's list of classic amps. Strange because we've lost count of the occasions we have made our way up to a stage to check out how some guitarist is getting such a great tone, only to find an unassuming Hot Rod and a selection of pedals providing the muscle. With that in mind, Fender's fourth revamp of the two-decade old range is big news for your average gigging guitar player. Let's see what they've done...

Upon unpacking our pair of Hot Rods – a Deluxe and its bigger brother, the DeVille – it's immediately apparent that the aesthetic is still reminiscent of a modified tweed amp. It's the look people achieved when they painted their narrow-panel tweed Twins and Supers black, and changed the speaker cloth to blackface spec back in the 60s. Hitherto, this tweed resemblance has been superficial, however things have taken a step closer with the latest Hot Rods, because they now feature solid pine cabinets, too.

Fender's revamping of the two-decade old Hot Rod range is big news for your average gigging guitar player

This means that they're slightly lighter than their forebears – 1.52kg and 1.72kg for the Deluxe and DeVille respectively. Other changes include ivory-coloured chicken-head control knobs to compliment the re-textured black control panel, a steel-reinforced strap handle, lightly-aged silver cloth and new speakers. The Deluxe features a single 12-inch Celestion A-Type and the DeVille gets a trouser-flapping pair.

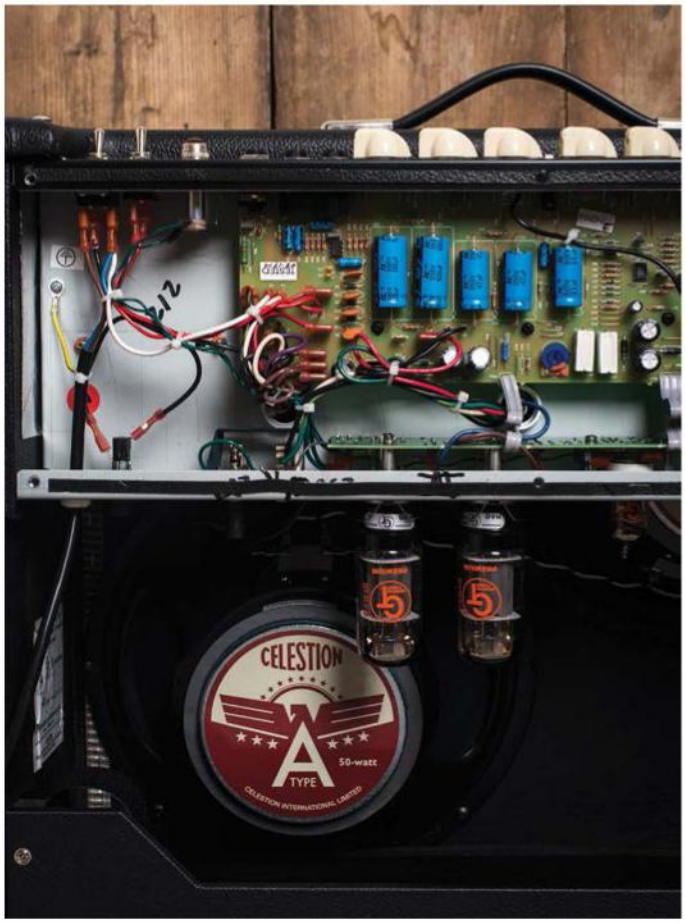
Inside, the preamp circuitry has been altered to provide better definition when the amps are overdriving, and the reverb tweaked for a smoother effect. Otherwise it's more of the same and given the enduring popularity of Hot Rods, there's nothing wrong with that.

Both amps feature two channels with shared presence and equalisation controls and hi/lo inputs. On the control panel, there are sockets for preamp output and power amp input. These can be used

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

FENDER HOT ROD DELUXE IV
The Hot Rod Deluxe is a classic staple of the small gigging scene, but you should audition the incredibly versatile **Egnater Tweaker** 40w 1x12 (**£649**), the **Orange Rocker 32** (**£899**) or the **Marshall JVM21SC** (**£899**) – all of which are compact gig-ready alternatives

FENDER HOT ROD DEVILLE IV
Similarly proportioned and powered but from this side of the Atlantic, try the EL34-loaded **Blackstar HT Stage 60 212 MkII £887**, while the **Peavey Classic 50 212 £817** offers tones and styling cues with a Fullerton flavour



as an effects loop, or you can plug the preamp output from one Hot Rod into the power amp input of a second Hot Rod to run both simultaneously. The control panel of the first amp runs the second amp too – reverb and presence excepted.

In Use

Even with single coils, the Hot Rod Deluxe's first channel doesn't offer much in the way of clean headroom. Thankfully, the volume pot taper seems to provide a greater degree of fine control than we've experienced with earlier Hot Rods. It's far easier to dial in the sweet spot where you can determine the amount of overdrive through playing intensity alone. This happens between three and four on the dial.

Ramp it up to around five and the Deluxe starts getting creamier and between six and seven you're into quite heavy overdrive. All is good up to around eight, beyond which a ragged and slightly grainy distortion begins to manifest. At higher volume levels, things improve somewhat when the bright switch is disengaged and the midrange is boosted. Get the tone control settings right, with a strong injection of mids and the bright switch disengaged, and the Hot Rod Deluxe can sound unexpectedly tweedy.

Channel two is all about dirt. Below two on the drive control overdrive is moderate, but there's a sudden jump to heavy drive and saturation increases fairly smoothly above that point. Towards maximum the HR Deluxe generates full-on metal levels of crunch and sustain.

The midrange character and smooth drive comes closer to the tone and feel of some high-priced hand-made amps

Even so, there's a more drive switch just in case you need a bit of extra dirt. Since the switch is doubled up on the footswitch, this is intended as a boost for soloing rather than an over the top button.

We think Fender has set the amount of lift about right and its effect is identical to turning up the drive control by around a third. There's no significant change in tonality and far from things getting edgy or ragged, the quality of the distortion actually becomes smoother and sustain is vastly improved. Swapping over to a Les Paul, powerchords have massive girth and you can hang onto notes pretty much as long as you want.

Most of the usable reverb range happens between one and three. Beyond this point things get seriously wet. The new reverb characteristic is thick, warm and very smooth. These revamped reverbs don't quite do the splatty surf thing that Fender amplifiers are commonly known for. Instead you get a warm three-dimensionality that is more suited to modern ambient atmospherics than surfing California-style.

The above description applies to both amplifiers, but we do need to compare them. Although in a very similar ballpark tonally, there are clear differences when running a Stratocaster into the clean channels.

The Deluxe has a thicker midrange with a chewier overdrive texture and a more compressed dynamic response. In contrast, the Hot Rod DeVille sounds bigger, clearer, cleaner and brighter. It also has a far tighter and punchier response than its little brother. Is it a case of better the DeVille you know? It all depends on how loud and clean you need your basic core amp tone to be.

We suspect that spreading the burden across two speakers in a larger cabinet accounts for most of the differences between the two models, and it's more a matter of taste than one of a clear-cut winner and loser. The Deluxe's midrange characteristics and smoother drive come closer to the tone and feel of some of the high-priced and hand-made amps you might find in premium guitar shops. However, for muscular, room-filling, big box Fender tones you'll want to have the DeVille sat behind you.

The Deluxe is more portable, but we find ourselves leaning towards the DeVille. All the tonal qualities we like about the former are even more apparent with the latter, but it's as if a sonic curtain has been lifted to create another level of definition, articulation and low-mid punch.

Although we've previously had mixed feelings about the distortion characteristics of Hot Rod drive channels, both of these amps overdrive way more smoothly than we're accustomed to. As such they would certainly cover most clean/crunch/solo requirements without any necessity to use pedals. Even so, these amps have proved vastly popular with pedal users and if that's the way you like things, the DeVille is surely the way to go.

KEY FEATURES

Fender Hot Rod Deluxe IV

- **PRICE** £849
- **DESCRIPTION** 2-channel fixed bias valve combo with reverb and solid pine cabinet. Made in Mexico
- **POWER RATING** 40W
- **VALVES** 3x 12AX7, 2x 6L6
- **CONTROL PANEL** Presence, reverb, master volume, middle, bass, treble, drive select switch, drive volume, bright switch, standby, power
- **REAR PANEL** 2x speaker outs
- **SPEAKER** 1x12 Celestion A-Type
- **DIMENSIONS** 476 x 597 x 267mm
- **WEIGHT** 18.59kg/41lbs
- **CONTACT** Fender UK 01342 331700 **www.fender.com**

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Very versatile
+ Fat midrange compression
+ Easy overdrive on both channels
+ Full and warm spring reverb

– Lacks clean headroom
– Treble slightly veiled

An effective update of the Hot Rod Deluxe with smoother overdriven tones and improved reverb

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Fender Hot Rod DeVille IV

- **PRICE** £999
- **DESCRIPTION** 2-channel fixed bias valve combo with reverb and solid pine cabinet. Made in Mexico
- **POWER RATING** 60W
- **VALVES** 3x 12AX7, 2x 6L6
- **CONTROL PANEL** Presence, reverb, master volume, middle, bass, treble, drive select switch, drive volume, bright switch, standby, power
- **REAR PANEL** 2x speaker outs
- **SPEAKER** 2x12 Celestion A-Type
- **DIMENSIONS** 533 x 616 x 250mm
- **WEIGHT** 25.06kg/55lbs

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Very versatile
+ Fine pedal platform
+ Extra clarity on both channels
+ Full and warm spring reverb

– It's big and heavy to lug around

Offering fine big box Fender tones from both channels, the MKIV DeVille is a great pedal platform – as well as a versatile plug and player

8/10

CODAMUSIC

www.coda-music.com

Gibson

Amazing range of 2017 & 2018 Custom, Memphis & Montana in stock.

Echopark GUITARS

With an artist roster including Joe Perry, Josh Homme & Troy Van Leeuwen - these guitars mean business! Coda Music are excited to be the first and only UK dealer to stock these stunning guitars! New delivery due soon, including Model J, 59 and La Carne.

Rivolta GUITARS BY DENNIS FANO

Rivolta Guitars is the latest creation from acclaimed guitar builder & designer Dennis Fano. New models Mondata, Mondata Junior and Combinata Junior due in soon. Combinata and Combinata Deluxe in stock.

Fender

We always carry a great selection Fender & Squier guitars, basses & amps. Amazing selection of American Standard Series guitars & basses in stock. It's been 60 years since Fender introduced the Stratocaster. Full range of 60th Anniversary guitars now in stock. Prices start from £364

Acoustic Guitars

Our new acoustic centre in Stevenage old town is open for business. This new showroom is home to an enormous choice of exquisite acoustic instruments from Bedell, Collings, Gibson, Gretsch, Lowden, Martin, National, Taylor, Yamaha, Epiphone and many many more!!!

BILT GUITARS

Coda Music is proud to present BILT Guitars...the ingenious creations of messers Bill Henss & Tim Thelen! Having built guitars for artist like Nels Cline, Lee Ranaldo, Brent Hinds, Dave Keuning & Wayne Sermon of Imagine Dragons these guys from Des Moines are starting to make serious waves in the guitar building world!!

New for 2018 Two Rock Traditional Clean Head and Combo now in stock.

Two-Rock

D'Angelico NEW YORK

D'Angelico guitars now in stock. Full range including Premier SS, EXL1, DC and DC Deluxe

fano guitars

The only place in the UK to see Fano guitars. New Fano Standard models now arriving. You could say the Fano Standard series is Fano's "greatest hits" collection. After studying their order history of custom Alt de Facto guitar line they combined the most popular requests of features & options into a new line of ready-to-play guitars.

We are delighted to be stocking Morgan amps and effects. First delivery now in.

MORGAN AMPLIFICATION

No nonsense straight forward Voxy/ Plexy/ Tweedy toned amplifiers designed by Adam Grimm and built in San Diego California.

Satellite AMPLIFIERS

100's of secondhand guitars, amps & pedals in stock, see www.coda-music.com for an up to date list.

We buy secondhand guitars - bring yours in for a quote & try something new at the same time

novo GUITARS BY DENNIS FANO

Coda Music are proud & delighted to be dealers of these fine instruments. Visit us instore to try one today.

Famous for the stunning and, quite frankly, game-changing Alt De Facto line of guitars, Dennis has become one of the most respected master luthiers and guitar designers of modern times. Dennis has been working on a new vision for the modern electric guitar...ladies and gentlemen i give you...Novo Guitars!!!

Fender CUSTOM SHOP

WHEN YOU'RE READY A Custom Shop guitar embodies everything Fender has learned over 60 years of building the world's most revered electric solidbodies. The finest materials, all the right details, hand built in Corona, California – it's the guitar of your dreams, realised.

WE HAVE THE GUITAR FOR YOU Coda Music is Europe's biggest and best Fender Custom Shop dealer, so whether you want a perfect New Old Stock, vintage-correct model, or the heaviest of Heavy Relics with a raft of custom playability tweaks, you'll find it here and with over 100 in stock in one store you won't find a better selection anywhere.

UNIQUE TO US, UNIQUE TO YOU Our extensive in-store stock includes many custom ordered guitars, built to our own exacting specs after years of buying, selling and playing these fabulous instruments.

CAN WE BUILD IT? Yes we can! If you have that extra special something in mind, we can work with you to make it a reality. Custom orders can be ready in a matter of months and cost less than you might think – call us, email us or drop in to discuss your perfect combination of features.

CARR AMPLIFIERS

Great selection of models and finishes, Europe's number one Carr amp dealer. Carr Mercury V now in stock.

Great selection of John Page Classic guitars in stock, from the original Ashburn Classic, the Ashburn Classic HH & new for 2017 the Ash bodied Ashburn & AJ.

Effects

Coda Music bring you the finest guitar effects pedals money can buy!...ready for you to demo with a your choice of amplifier and guitar!!!

Our pedal range includes the usual suspects such as Boss, Electro Harmonix, Ibanez, Jim Dunlop, Joyo, Line 6, Mesa Boogie, Mooer, MXR, Strymon, T-Rex, TC Electronic, Visual Sound, Voodoo Lab, Wampler, Way Huge, Xotic……we also have a huge selection of the less ordinary suspects like Bad Cat, Death By Audio, Earthquaker Devices, EWS, Faifield Electronic, Free The Tone, Fulltone Custom Shop, Jetter Gear, Keeley, Mad Professor, Providence, Rothwell and Sonic Edge!!!

51a High Street, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3AH t: 01438 350 815 e: stevenage@coda-music.co.uk
Acoustic Centre 27b Church Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3QW t: 01438 350815 e: acoustics@coda-music.com

Instant decision 9 months 0% finance
available on all new products over £300 on our website

SUPRO 1685RT NEPTUNE REVERB & 1699RH STATESMAN

The reborn Supro continues to push its ambitions beyond mere reissues of heritage amps – will these two all-new models convince **RICHARD PURVIS** that the past has a future?

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Supro isn't the only recently revived American amp brand – another contender in 2x12 combo form is the **Magnatone Twilighter Stereo** (**£3,199**). The **Fender '59 Bassman** (**£1,679**) is a classic 6L6-driven option, or if you want to go fully authentic you could track down an original **Sears-Silvertone 1484** head and cab (**£1,000 approx**)

With the range going from strength to strength, it's time to declare that the Supro revival to be more than just a passing retro fad. There are now guitars involved as well a growing range of amps, and the list of endorsers has expanded to include artists as diverse as Paul Simon, Joe Perry, Brian Setzer and The Cure. Excuse us for a moment while we try to imagine what that supergroup would sound like...

It's a serious point, though – you wouldn't get all that lot on board if your only trick was garage-rock overdrive delivered with a cutesy 60s-style logo and some odd-textured vinyl. So we're fully expecting these latest non-reissue amps to provide tonal diversity as well as nostalgic charm.

They certainly look promising, with a style that's 'vintage correct' but not restrictively old-fashioned. While the words 'assembled in the USA' suggest much of the electronic work has been done elsewhere, the standard of finish on both combo and head is exceptional – and even if amp techs might grumble about the PCB-mounted valve bases, the insides are generally pretty tidy as well.

We've already reviewed Supros with 6973 output valves, and had few complaints tone-wise. The one issue is that its scarcity could create headaches in the future; but the fact that it's now used in four different models (and Electro-Harmonix is already selling replacements) offers some reassurance.

We're fully expecting these latest non-reissue amps to provide tonal diversity as well as nostalgic charm

1685RT Neptune Reverb

Supro isn't shy about its intentions with this 2x12 combo: the website describes it as "a clear answer to the Fender Twin and Vox AC30". At 25 watts it shouldn't be loud enough to match either of its competitors, but that's perhaps an advantage in this age of box-room recording and PAs that actually work. It's billed as Class A and the speakers are Supro's own ceramic BD12s.

There's also a full-width four-spring reverb tank, and a tremolo circuit that uses the same output bias modulation method as the original Supros.

1699RH Statesman

The change from blue to grey vinyl indicates we're now moving into the 50s-inspired 'Classic' series – and we're on more familiar ground with

a pair of 6L6s belting out 50 watts. There's no tremolo this time, and the reverb tank is only half-size, but you do get two channels and there's a dual footswitch included for selecting one, two or both in parallel.

There's also a valve-driven effects loop, and this one does a lot more than letting you plug in your delay pedal after the preamp. Using the separate send and return level controls, you can effectively add a master volume or switchable boost to channel two, blend the reverb with the dry-only channel one, or create spooky 'wet only' effects.

The 1x12 cab supplied for review has the same 12BD speaker found in the Neptune. It's the same width as the Statesman and, but for the awkwardly mismatched logos, sits quite nicely beneath it.

In Use

As it's stated rival, Fender's classic Twin workhorse isn't a bad place to start in evaluating the tone of the Neptune. It has the same sparkle in the top end, the same thunderous power in the lows, and – though it clearly can't compete with an 85-watter for clean headroom – this is one Supro that's definitely not all about the overdrive.

With low-output pickups there's very little break-up at all until you're

well into the second half of the volume dial – but don't be in too much of a hurry to go there, because the non-crunching stuff is quite spectacularly nice. You'll probably need to pull back the bass control to tame the blooming bottom end, but simple chords on a Jazzmaster produce some of the sweetest 6V6-like clean tones ever to tickle our ears.

Simple chords on a Jazzmaster produce some of the sweetest 6V6-like clean tones ever to tickle our ears

The reverb isn't the most lively but works well enough for general duties, while that throbbing Supro tremolo sounds as cool as ever, even if it doesn't go as fast or as deep as some. We had issues with switching here, though: a standard TRS footswitch borrowed from another amp wouldn't work properly, and neither would the other Supro's channel-switcher.

Speaking of the Statesman, let's say right off that neither of this amp's two channels can deliver quite the same delicious cleans as the Neptune – but they're not far off, and as well as the extra wattage there's a whole load more gain on offer here.

Channel one is the straight-ahead rock monster, with just two controls and a preamp circuit lifted from the Thunderbolt model. It sounds hugely rich and meaty, and can dish out the now familiar Supro grind with one hand while combing its quiff with the other. Channel one, based on the Comet combo, is a touch less punchy and offers more of the Neptune's laid-back freshness. You can easily set up clean/dirty switching in either direction, and the only disappointment is that selecting both channels in parallel is a bit of an anticlimax – you basically get the sound of whichever channel is set loudest with just a hint of added oomph thrown in.

Changing from Class A to Class A/B also brings only a subtle shift in perceived power and looseness – it's not a 'Vox to Marshall' transformation. More obviously effective is that ingenious effects loop, which has no trouble in pulling off all the tricks that we mentioned a few paragraphs ago. It all adds up to an impressively versatile two-channel head.

KEY FEATURES

1685RT Neptune Reverb

- **PRICE** £1,499
- **DESCRIPTION** 1-channel valve combo. Assembled in USA
- **POWER RATING** 25w
- **VALVES** 4x 12AX7, 1x 12AT7, 2x 6973
- **TOP PANEL** Guitar input; volume, treble, bass, reverb, tremolo speed, tremolo depth; standby and power switches
- **REAR PANEL** 4-ohm speaker output, TRS footswitch input (reverb and tremolo)
- **SPEAKERS** 2x Supro BD12
- **DIMENSIONS** 710 x 460 x 265mm
- **WEIGHT** 24.5kg/54lbs

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Great mix of thumping bass and pretty top-end chime
+ Addictive tremolo
+ Immaculately finished

– Doesn't do high-gain overdrive
– Our amp had footswitch issues

A quirky amp with plenty of power and a core tone that's easy to love

9/10

KEY FEATURES

1699RH Statesman

- **PRICE** £1,449
- **DESCRIPTION** 2-channel valve head. Assembled in USA
- **POWER RATING** 50w
- **VALVES** 4x 12AX7, 1x 12AT7, 2x 6L6
- **FRONT PANEL** Guitar input; channel 1 volume and tone, three-way channel switch; channel 2 volume, treble, bass, reverb; class switch (A or A/B), standby and power switches
- **REAR PANEL** Speaker outputs (2x 4 ohms, 2x 8 ohms, 1x 16 ohms), effects loop send and return plus send/return levels and bypass switch; footswitch inputs for effects loop (TS), reverb (TS) and channel switching (TS or TRS)
- **DIMENSIONS** 520 x 290 x 195mm
- **WEIGHT** 15kg/33.1lbs
- **CAB SUPPLIED** 1790 Black Magic 1x12 with Supro BD12 (£519)
- **CONTACT** John Hornby Skewes 0113 286 5381 **www.suprousa.com**

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Loads of ultra-rich gain on tap
+ Two channels offer plenty of sonic flexibility
+ Some clever switching options to be had using the effects loop

– Can't match the Neptune for sheer sweetness in its cleans
– The 'both channels' setting is slightly disappointing

A beast of a two-channel head that excels at big, chewy overdrive

8/10

SOUNDPAD

Tel 01271 323686 | **www.soundpad.co.uk** | **info@soundpad.co.uk**

SINCE 1972 — **Service Second to None**
Online & Instore

dpd NEXT DAY BEFORE NOON — **DPD Next Day Delivery**
Available in the UK

Take it away V12 Retail Finance — **Finance Available Online**
Call for more details

Recent arrivals..

Gibson Custom 1959 Les Paul Standard Reissue - Only 59 ever made!
In superb condition throughout, this instrument is hard to tell from a new one. Comes complete with the original Gibson deluxe hardcase. The 1959s acquired many unique features, all of which has been carefully re-created on this reissue model. Including the slightly thinner neck profile, Alnico II PAF pickups and much more.. More photos and information online.

Fender Custom Shop Jaco Pastorius Tribute - Fretless
Although technically secondhand, this bass is in like new condition. Finished in a fantastic road-worn Relic finish, based on Jaco Pastorius's bass guitar. It features a Select Alder Body, Nitro-cellulose Lacquer, Custom 60s Single Coil Pickups. It also comes with the original Fender Deluxe Hard Case. More photos and information online.

More Information & High Resolution Photos on our website at:
www.soundpad.co.uk

Fender FSR Ltd Edition '50 Stratocaster
Period correct '50s style strat. Finished in Fiesta Red with Gold Hardware. American Vintage Pickups. With Fender Pro Hard Case.

Fender Blues Junior Limited Edition
Finished in Lacquered Tweed. 15 watts all valve. 12" Jensen Speaker. Recently re-valved. Fantastic Condition. Photos Online.

Fender '94 Twin Amp (Evil Twin)
4x 6L6 (100 watts / 25 watts switchable). Known as 'Evil Twin'. Excellent condition. Comes with Fender 3 way switch and cover.

Fender Cyber Twin
Circa 2002. 2x12" combo. Auto Rotary Controls (self moving). 2x 65 watt amp. Comes with Cyber Foot Pedal board controller.

Jackson Pro Monarkh SC Tobacco Burst
Fantastic condition. With Seymour Duncan Blackouts Active Pickups. Maple Top with High Gloss Tobacco burst.

Jackson KEXMG X Series Kelly
White with Black Bevels. Thru-neck. EMG 81/85 Active Pickups. Floyd Rose Tremolo. Fantastic condition. Photos online.

Fender FSR Classic 50s Telecaster 90
Limited Edition. Fender Special Run. Finished in Lake Placid Blue. P-90 neck pickup & American Vintage '58 Bridge Pickup.

Gretsch G5435TG Limited Edition
Finished in Candy Apple Red with Gold Hardware. Dual Black Top Filter'Tron Humbucking Pickups. Beautiful!!!

Gretsch G5420T Electromatic
Finished in Fairlane Blue. Bigsby Tremolo. Blacktop Filter'tron Humbucking Pickups. 5-ply Maple Body.

Gibson 2001 ES-175 - Vintage Sunburst
Fantastic condition. More photos online. Beautiful tone and action. Comes fully setup with original hard case.

Fender Classic Player Jaguar Special HH
Finished in Olympic White. New Hotter Pickups with fatter tone. Multiple improvements. With Fender Gig Bag.

The Heritage H150CM
Made in Gibson's old Kalamazoo Factory in 2001. Featuring Seymour Duncan '59 Humbuckers. Perfect Condition. Hard Case.

Sandberg California VS
4 String Bass. Finished in Sunburst. 6 Bolted Hard rock maple Neck. Split coil output pick-ups. Fantastic quality.

Fender FSR Classic 69 Telecaster
Pink Paisley. Made in Japan. Fender Special Run. Slim C Neck. Vintage Style Single Coil Pickups. Classic Finish!

Rickenbacker 360/12 Mapleglo
Deluxe Hollow Body with a special contoured body. Rosewood Fingerboard with Triangular Inlays. Made in USA. With Hard Case.

Rickenbacker 620/6 Mapleglo
Deluxe Hollow Body with a special contoured body. Rosewood Fingerboard with Triangular Inlays. Made in USA. With Hard Case.

Swart

SWART ANTARES

This boutique maker claims its new amp combines the best of its other amps in a package that's also totally unique. Confused? **HUW PRICE** finds out if Swart can keep it sweet...

We have a lot of time for Michael Swart's retro-inspired creations, because in addition to their gorgeous tones, the amps don't take the obvious route in terms of styling. For instance, last year we looked at the MOD 84 – an amp inspired by the Vox AC15 and fitted with EL84s... but with vintage Americana cosmetics. It's the same story with Swart's latest creation – the Antares has the black and gold appearance of a classic Brit combo, but with 6V6s pushing 18 watts, it's American on the inside.

The Antares aims to combine the best bits of Swart's Atomic Space Tone and MOD 84 amps to create something versatile and exciting. Fittingly, the 18-watt power rating sits between the MOD 84's 15 and the AST's 20, and like the latter, the Antares can be run with 6L6s too. You can also swap between 5AR4, 5Y3 and 5U4 rectifiers to alter the voltages, and therefore the amp's feel and breakup characteristics. It also promises a bigger reverb sound, deeper bottom-end, a new custom output transformer and three-way EQ inspired by the MOD 84, the tube-biased tremolo from the AST and a tube-driven spring reverb.

Like many newer Swarts, the Antares has top-mounted controls, and the solid pine cabinet contains a Celestion G12H Creamback with 75Hz bass resonance. Although not that tall, the cabinet is very wide for a 1x12, so there's a lot of air around the speaker. The circuit is a mixture of point-to-point and turret board wiring, and the main components are Mallory 150 capacitors and carbon composite resistors.

In Use

With really good amps, you can swap between guitars without needing to alter the controls in any significant way – if at all. Granted you'll notice the difference in tones, but there's no imperative to tweak the treble or re-balance the gain structure. The Antares is one such amp and once you've it dialled in, it somehow gets on with the job of bringing out the tone of each instrument. Such is its inherent balance, if you do struggle when changing guitars, it might be that the guitars need adjustment rather than the amp.

> The Antares is about as good as it gets for roots styles, ambient rock and more besides

We start with a Strat plugged into the high input, the tone and volume set about half way and all the effects controls turned down. As with the MOD 84, we find the loudest tone setting with the widest frequency range comes with the voicing switch in position three.

Immediately we're met with the full, detailed and balanced tone that we have come to expect from Swart amps. There's a pleasing pop at the front of notes, that stops short of being spiky, and such is the natural

KEY FEATURES

Swart Antares

- **PRICE** £2,099 (inc trem/reverb footswitch)
- **DESCRIPTION** 1-channel cathode-biased valve combo with reverb and tremolo. Made in the USA
- **POWER RATING** 18w
- **VALVES** 2x 12AX7, 1x 12DW7, 2x 6V6, 1x 5AR4
- **CONTROL PANEL** Power, standby, hi/lo input sockets, 3-way EQ switch, volume, tone, space, speed, depth
- **SPEAKER** 1x Celestion G12 Creamback
- **DIMENSIONS** 584 x 406 x 228mm
- **WEIGHT** 16.7kg/37lbs
- **CONTACT** Coda Music 01438 350 815 **www.coda-music.com** **www.swartamps.com**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

We're spoiled for choice with boutique beauties at this price point. The **Carr Mercury V £2499** and **Tone King Imperial II £2349** have built-in attenuation, while the **Milkman 20W Creamer £2699** offers valve swapping with optional power scaling

spaciousness of the sound, we find ourselves double-checking that the reverb is fully off. It's a subtle thing, but this natural 3D quality is something we've noticed from some really good tweed-style amps.

Even so, we dial in some reverb and things get even better. Swart's reverb never disappoints and it's quite unlike vintage Fender spring reverb. Swart's is a full-frequency effect that somehow gels with the dry guitar while remaining distinct. We suspect the space control comes after the reverb tank, so the guitar signal going into the reverb remains unaltered. This means the reverb never gets splashy or grainy, and the character of the effect remains unaltered irrespective of where the space control is set.

It sounds more like a high-end studio spring unit, and it's one of the few amp reverbs we enjoy playing when set at maximum. Selecting the Strat's in between position and picking with fleshy thumb and fingers, it's a dead ringer for Knopfler's tone on the first Dire Straits album.

The tremolo is no less impressive, with well-chosen speed range and a depth capability that can go from a subtle shimmer to staccato and all points in between. Used alone, you can detect a slightly swirly quality with a subtle hint of frequency sweep that could fool the ear into thinking there's pitch modulation going on, too. Combine this with reverb and the effect is borderline hypnotic.

Amps with single tone and volume controls are often damned as 'not versatile'. Much depends on how you would define 'versatile', but if you know what you're doing you can extract a wide array of tones here.

Even before experimenting with the voicing switch, the Antares is revealed as a flexible feast of tone. With the tone maxed and the volume set low, the amp sounds sparkly and snappy but also full. This is where you can find your funk, country and clean blues tones.

As the volume increases, there's a gradual midrange thickening with a hint of harmonic texture creeping in as overdrive comes in gently. The headroom impresses, because things stay pretty clean with single coils until almost half volume. Dial back the tone and things quickly change. You can almost picture the EQ curve as the sparkle frequencies drop off and an upper mid bark begins to assert itself. This tonal balance is retained as volume increases and overdrive gets stronger.

As with the tremolo and reverb controls, the volume and tone remain usable across their entire ranges. With both maxed out, the Antares delivers heavy overdrive with tremendous clarity. Swing tone fully anti-clockwise and you get the sort of chewy and smooth saturation you might associate with octal preamp tweeds or a late-50s Gibson GA40. This is where the tone switch provides some precision shaping. If you find the lows a tad thick, flick the switch to position one and things tighten up considerably. If that emphasises the upper mids and treble a little too much for you, select the centre position and things sweeten without losing definition.

The voicing switch is particularly impressive because it provides tone shaping without being part of a regular tonestack – despite Swart calling it an 'EQ switch'. Instead it alters the way the preamp valve is biased and so, determines which regions of the frequency spectrum are amplified and by how much. At no point is the actual guitar signal passing through the biasing circuit.

The switch itself feels a little flimsy, but other than that, we can find no fault. The Antares is yet another undeniably great Swart amp, which means it's about as good as it gets for roots styles, ambient rock and more besides. It's not exactly cheap, but it's worth it.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Ultra-smooth yet heavy overdrive
+ Wide gain/tone range
+ Complex and engrossing harmonics
+ Sumptuous reverb and a lush, deep tremolo

– The EQ switch is a little flimsy

Another incredible Swart amp, and with the big cabinet and voicing switch, it may be our favourite so far

10/10

The Guitar Magazine

MASTERCLASS SERIES 2018

DARREL HIGHAM

22 FEBRUARY

JON GOMM

07 MARCH

GUTHRIE GOVAN

22 MARCH

DINGWALLS, CAMDEN

VIP & STANDARD EARLY BIRD TICKETS available now!

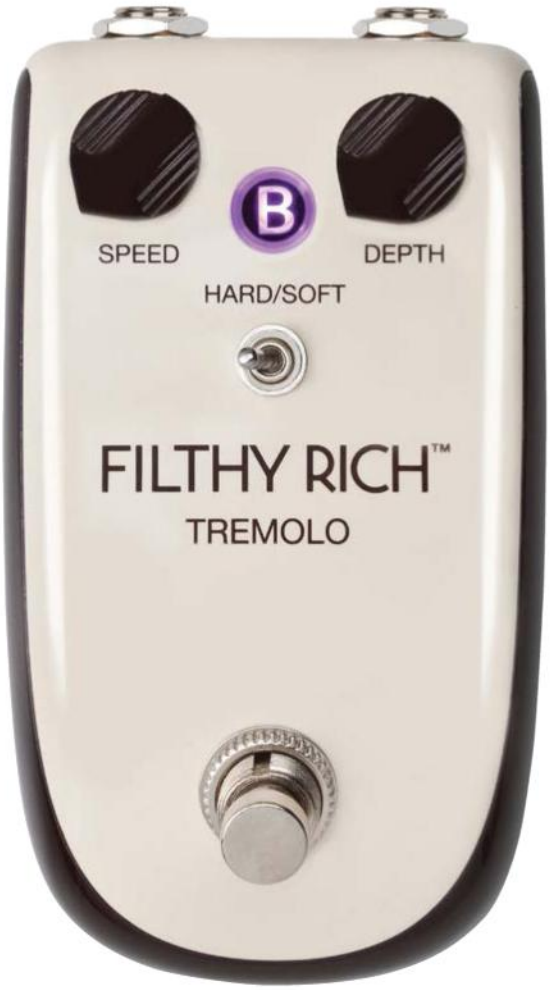
Brought to you by Allianz

Lowden GUITARS

DIMEONLINE POWERED BY DETROIT INSTITUTE OF MUSIC EDUCATION

PEAVEY INNOVATION. AMPLIFIED.

TO BOOK NOW, VISIT
WWW.EVENTIM.CO.UK/MASTERCLASS



DANELECTRO
BILLIONAIRE PEDALS

Danelectro has a reputation for quality budget effects, but the new Billionaire range sees the company promising even more bang for your buck. **MICHAEL WATTS** feels flush...

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Few companies can compete with Danelectro when it comes to characterful, budget-friendly equipment, but if pedalboard space and funds are a real consideration then the **Joyo** and **Mooer** pedal lines should definitely be on your radar

'Billionaire by Danelectro'. The name alone raises a wry smile. Despite their budget price point, Danelectro pedals have often punched above their weight class when it comes to sheer musicality. Some of the company's pedals (the long discontinued Back Talk reverse delay being a case in point) have become classics – commanding high prices on the second-hand market. Unlike the usual plastic cheap and cheerful Dano pedals of old, however, the Billionaire range offers true-bypass, die-cast construction, sleek lines and some useful features that may elevate them above the competition.

In a now increasingly standard move, these pedals have no batteries and need juice from a power supply. This helps keep them compact and pedalboard-friendly, but they're not the smallest pedals out there. Each unit has a blindingly bright purple LED to show when it's on, and smooth-turning plastic knobs in hues that match the 'custom automobile colours' on the chassis. They're sophisticated-looking units that certainly don't appear 'budget'.

Unboxing the first of these pedals it is clear that a lot of thought has gone into the presentation. Each pedal comes in a soft bag to protect the surprisingly high quality finish – not necessarily something you'd expect from a budget brand, but Danelectro has previous when it comes to surprises.

Filthy Rich Tremolo

First up is the Filthy Rich Tremolo, which comes with a hard and soft switch to provide you with a wide variety of sounds – from subtle country shimmers and dock-side rumblings through to Mancunian indie lord and 'attack helicopter'. Good stuff. Tremolo can be an extremely musical effect, but many pedals suffer from a perceived drop in volume when engaged. If you feel that your evocative tremolo sound

is getting lost in the band mix, then Danelectro has got you covered with a trim pot inside the pedal to give the volume a cheeky bump.

The instruction manual makes the good point that many vintage amps have the tremolo stage after the reverb, and applying this approach to your signal chain does make a difference, adding definition and detail to the sound – give it a try and see what we mean.

Guitarists are now spoilt for choice when it comes to tremolo pedal options, even at this more bank-friendly end of things. It is however, relatively rare to encounter such a versatile unit at this price point. What really sets the Filthy Rich Tremolo apart is the quality of sound in both soft and hard settings – it's very musical and very easy (and a lot of fun) to use.

What really sets the Filthy Rich Tremolo apart is the quality of sound in both soft and hard settings

Pride Of Texas

With a name like Pride Of Texas there can be little ambiguity about what Danelectro is aiming for with this pedal. If anything you almost have to admire the restraint to not paint it *that* shade of Green.

Without further ado, it's time to plug in a Strat and start scuttlebuttin' – and it is immediately apparent that Danelectro has come up with something pretty special. Pleasingly mid-heavy and grunty, the Pride of Texas adds real bite and focus to the sound, tightening up the bottom end and making for a very articulate and inspiring experience. We find ourselves wondering if we haven't plugged in something a lot more expensive by mistake.

While it's obviously being pitched at the SRV blueshound demographic, this is more than just another TS808 or TS-9 attempt. It's very responsive and warm for the price and it absolutely excels when played fingerstyle with a slide – very impressive.

Outside of the blues realm, the Pride of Texas proves itself to be a very capable pedal in just about any context where you would benefit

KEY FEATURES

Danelectro Billionaire Filthy Rich Tremolo

- **PRICE** £79
- **DESCRIPTION** Tremolo pedal. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Speed, 2x depth knobs, hard/soft mini switch, bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm
- **CONTACT** John Hornby Skewes 0113 286 5381 **danelectro.com**

Danelectro Billionaire BB-1 Billion Dollar Boost

- **PRICE** £79
- **DESCRIPTION** Boost pedal. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Volume, treble, bass knobs, flat/low-cut mini switch and bypass foot switch
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm

KEY FEATURES (continued)

Danelectro Billionaire Pride of Texas

- **PRICE** £89
- **DESCRIPTION** Overdrive pedal. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Volume, gain, treble, bass knobs, bypass footswitch
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm

Danelectro Billionaire Big Spender Spinning Speaker

- **PRICE** £99
- **DESCRIPTION** Rotary speaker emulator. Made in China
- **CONTROLS** Volume, treble and speed, ramp and bypass footswitches
- **FEATURES** True bypass, 9V mains supply only (not supplied)
- **DIMENSIONS** 135 x 58 x 76mm

from a quality mid-gain drive. Apparently Billionaires also get privileged access to independent bass and treble controls. Handy!

Big Spender

It is wise to approach budget rotary speaker simulators with a degree of caution. They often sound like slightly watery and insipid phaser/chorus/vibrato mash-ups rather than tectonic plate-shifting psychedelic powerhouses. In short, it's a difficult effect to get right.

Danelectro has come pretty close here, having avoided the worst of these pitfalls by giving us separate volume and treble knobs, which can drive your amp with extremely pleasing amounts of gain, and tailor the amount of sheen and shimmer involved, too. As you might hope, there's also a ramp button to simulate the slowing down and speeding up of a real Leslie, and a speed knob, too. There's not much room here for the dual footswitch set-up, but given the current trend for miniature boutique units jigsawed onto tiny boards, this isn't the most cramped layout we've seen.

Sonically you'll get some pretty convincing funk organ chord stabs – it won't turn you into Jimmy Smith but you'll have a lot of fun anyway. It's greasy, with shimmer on the top end and when you add some grit with the volume it gets all kinds of sleazy. Or you could just play *Bridge Of Sighs* until the neighbours complain...

Billion Dollar Boost

Last, but by no means least, here comes the Billion Dollar Boost. Promising not only a full spectrum jump in volume but also extra detail and dynamics, Danelectro describes this sound as 'The secret weapon of Irish and British alt-rockers'. We wonder what ever could they mean? Our money is on this being a take on some early FET preamp that was found lurking in a corner of one of The Edge's mega-boards.

Most of us require two things from a boost pedal, the first being an increase in volume, detail and responsiveness, the second the ability to massage this boosted tone with some EQ. Danelectro comes good here with plenty of available gain, and bass and treble controls. There's also a flat/low cut switch, giving you the option of subtly altering your sound by shelving the lower frequencies. We find this to be very effective in band rehearsals.

Danelectro's tongue-in-cheek marketing aside, this new range of pedals offers some genuinely useful features and good sounds for not a lot of cash. They may not be the most finessed tones out there but at this price point the quality is impressive – particularly in the case of the Pride Of Texas.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

Danelectro Billionaire Pedals

+ Excellent sounds for not a lot of cash
+ Stylish, high-quality enclosures
+ True bypass switching

- Form-factor makes things rather cramped on the Big Spender
- The angled footswitches can be hard to activate when behind other pedals on your board

The Billionaire range elevates Dano's pedals from budget curios to proper gigging options – with road-hardy build quality, quirky good looks and high-quality sounds

9/10

Watford Valves

24 HOUR ONLINE ORDERING AT www.watfordvalves.com
All valves individually multi-tested and digitally matched.
Expert advice on all valve amps.
THE MUSICIANS CHOICE ☎ 01923 893270

CRYOGENIC

AC/DC, Oasis, Brian May, Manics, Radiohead and Peter Gabriel buy our valves

www.watfordvalves.com

GROOVE TUBE 12AX7 MULLARD CRYO

Bluesbreaker Tone

The Groove Tubes 12AX7 Mullard Cryo reissue is unique to GT and follows the Mullard design and production techniques meticulously. More importantly, sonically they have made an absolute classic, as these have all the dynamics and bite of the originals. The cryo treatment ensures that you get the bes CLAPTON Bluesbreaker tone with more bite and clarity and incredible dynamics. So if you want to put back the pile driving crunch and the sparkling highs in your sound then the GT 12AX7 Mullard is for you, outstanding value at only £24.00 each.

SPECIAL OFFER
6L6WGB/5881 PHILIPS ORIGINAL USA

These Philips 6L6WGB have had rave reviews from both sides of the Atlantic. They are built to higher spec than any other 6L6 and are noted for their rich sustain, tight punchy bass and superb midrange twang, which no other 6L6 can equal. These are guaranteed to upgrade your Fender or Boogie, so take advantage of our special offer on these now extremely rare tested and matched military grade American Philips.
Only £30 each on this month's Christmas offer.

HARMA RETRO - CRYO SUPERIOR GRADE

The Harma Retro Cryo range recreates the classic sounds and designs of the most famous new old stock valves for a new generation of musician. So if you want an EL34 to crunch like an old Mullard or a 6L6GC to sing like a Sylvania. Then the Harma Cryo Retro range is the one for you.
All preamp valves are drive tested. All output valves are high plate volt drive tested under full working conditions for maximum reliability. Used by the industry's biggest names including Brian May, Thunder, Iron Maiden and the We Will Rock You shows worldwide.

ECC83-Retro Cryo	**£21.60**	**KT66- Retro Cryo**	**£48.00**
EL34-Retro Cryo	**£24.00**	**5U4GB- Retro Cryo**	**£24.00**
EL84-Retro Cryo	**£24.00**	**6550A-Retro Cryo**	**£34.56**
EZ81-Retro Cryo	**£24.00**	**6L6GC-Retro Cryo**	**£24.00**
GZ34- Retro Cryo	**£26.40**	**6550A-Retro Cryo**	**£34.56**

*** JJ TESLA TRADE OFFER ***

JJ Tesla valves have a worldwide reputation for excellent sound quality. These valves are one of our most popular ranges for our trade and service customers. Our full trade and quantity details on JJ and other popular valve brands are on our website with quantity prices starting as low as 10 pieces per type. Here are some examples of our JJ quantity prices:

ECC81	**10 Pcs**	**£7.20 Each**	**EL34 mk2**	**16 Pcs**	**£12.00 Each**
ECC82	**10 Pcs**	**£7.20 Each**	**E34L**	**16 Pcs**	**£13.50 Each**
ECC83-S	**10 Pcs**	**£7.50 Each**	**EL84**	**16 Pcs**	**£7.20 Each**
ECC83-S	**20 Pcs**	**£7.20 Each**	**6L6GC**	**16 Pcs**	**£13.20 Each**
ECC83-S	**40 Pcs**	**£6.90 Each**	**6V6GTS**	**16 Pcs**	**£12.00 Each**
ECC83-MG	**10 Pcs**	**£9.00 Each**	**5881**	**16 Pcs**	**£13.20 Each**
ECC83-MG	**20 Pcs**	**£8.76 Each**	**6550**	**12 Pcs**	**£25.20 Each**
5751	**10 Pcs**	**£9.00 Each**	**KT88**	**12 Pcs**	**£26.40 Each**

MARSHALL CLASSIC CRYO PREAMP KITS

*****MULLARD TONE*****

The Harma ECC83-Retro Cryo is a true sounding recreation of the Mullard ECCC83. These specially selected Cryo Retro preamp kits will provide the classic Marshall crunch, with Mullard style warm mids, but without any fizz or harshness. The Cryo version has a smoother distortion more detail and clarity. They also have more bite and punch over the standard version. Each valve is selected for gain, output and low noise and each set includes a balanced valve for the phase inverter position. These classic kits will put the crunch back into your Marshall.

Standard gain preamp kits		**High Gain preamp kits**	
3 valve	**£63.24**	**3 Valve**	**£67.32**
4 valve	**£83.64**	**4 Valve**	**£89.76**
5 valve	**£104.04**	**5 Valve**	**£112.20**

GAIN RATED FENDER PREAMP REVALVE KITS

A specially selected range of gain rated pre amp kits for your Fender amplifier. If you want more clean headroom how about our low gain 55 kit which will reduce the gain by 55%. Want a nice crunchy overdrive? Then fit our standard gain kit, want to take the brittle edge off your sound? then fit our medium gain 15 kit. Get the tone you want from your Fender today with these amazing pre amp kits. Full range on our website.

	Pro Junior	**Blues Junior**	**Hot Rod Deluxe**	**Hot Rod Deville**
Low Gain 55	**£34.56**	**£46.08**	**£46.08**	**£46.08**
Low Gain 40	**£26.88**	**£38.40**	**£38.40**	**£38.40**
Medium Gain 30	**£49.68**	**£62.64**	**£62.64**	**£62.64**
Medium Gain 15	**£30.72**	**£42.24**	**£42.24**	**£42.24**
Standard Gain	**£26.88**	**£38.40**	**£38.40**	**£38.40**

CELESTION SPEAKERS

FREE DELIVERY — FREE DELIVERY

Big discounts on Guitar and Bass speakers

Celestion speakers have been behind some of the greatest names in Rock History. We have all Guitar 12 models on FREE DELIVERY to UK mainland; see our website for full details.
We have upto 50% off Bass Guitar speaker see our website for full details.

Celestion Anico Blue	**£199**	**Celestion Bass BL10-200X 30% OFF**	
Celestion A Type	**£69**	**Celestion Bass BL12-200X 30% OFF**	
Celestion G12H Red	**£105**	**Celestion Bass BL15-400X 50% OFF**	

HARMA SUPERIOR GRADE

Our own brand, the best selected and tested valves in the industry. All preamp valves are drive tested. All output valves are high plate volt tested under full working conditions for maximum reliability.
Used by the industries biggest names including Brian May, Thunder, Iron Maiden and the We Will Rock You shows worldwide.

ECC81-STR	**£14.40**	**EL84/E84L burst tested**	**£21.60**
ECC83-STR	**£14.40**	**EL84 Retro**	**£18.00**
ECC83-7025-STR	**£14.40**	**5881-Mil Spec**	**£19.20**
EL34 STR	**£19.20**	**6L6GC STR**	**£21.60**
EL34 Retro	**£21.60**	**6L6GC-Retro**	**£21.60**
EL84/E84L Standard	**£18.00**	**GZ34-Retro**	**£21.60**

KEELEY PEDALS

FREE DELIVERY — FREE DELIVERY

FREE DELIVERY on many Keeley branded pedals

Keeley pedals provide the ultimate in tonal clarity and sonic fidelity. We have all the new Tube Screamers and the stunning new Work Stations in stock. We can cater for all your overdrive needs.

Keeley Tesla MK3 Fuzz Ltd Ed	**£174**	**Keeley DS-9 Distortion**	**£132**
Keeley Memphis Sun	**£169**	**Keeley Super Phat Mod**	**£149**
Keeley Compressor Plus	**£129**	**Keeley Red Dirt OD 2**	**£189**
Keeley 4 Knob Compressor	**£159**	**Keeley KE-808 Ltd Edition**	**£199**
Keeley GC 2 Compressor	**£189**	**Keeley D & M Drive**	**£222**
Keeley Tone workstation	**£289**	**Keeley Mod workstation**	**£289**

Full range in stock, see our website

HARMA GUITAR SPEAKERS

FREE DELIVERY — FREE DELIVERY

All Hand Made in England

After extensive research consulting many professional musicians Watford Valves now produce Harma high quality handmade Guitar Speakers.
Here is one of our customers reviews -
J McLachlan said "**Simply the best speaker I have ever used**" after fitting the Harma Bright Sapphire in his Fender Deluxe reverb.

American Series		**British Series**	
Bright Sapphire	£90.78	Blue Ruby	£86.70
Clear Sapphire	£90.78	Classic Ruby	£86.70
Dark Sapphire	£90.78	Vintage Ruby	£86.70
Smooth Sapphire	£90.78	Vintage Topaz	£90.78

FREE DELIVERY TO UK MAINLAND

MAIL ORDER Fax: 01923 679207

☎ **01923 893270**

SOLO SWITCH VISA

see our new website

www.watfordvalves.com

AMERICAN SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

The Guitar Magazine

Save 40% when you subscribe

GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE!

Save 40% on the shop price*
Get 12 issues per year
Pay just $41.83 every 6 months
Never miss an issue
International delivery included

Dial toll free
800 428 3003
Quoting code **TGMP2906**

Order online at
imsnews.com/guitar
Entering code **TGMP2906**

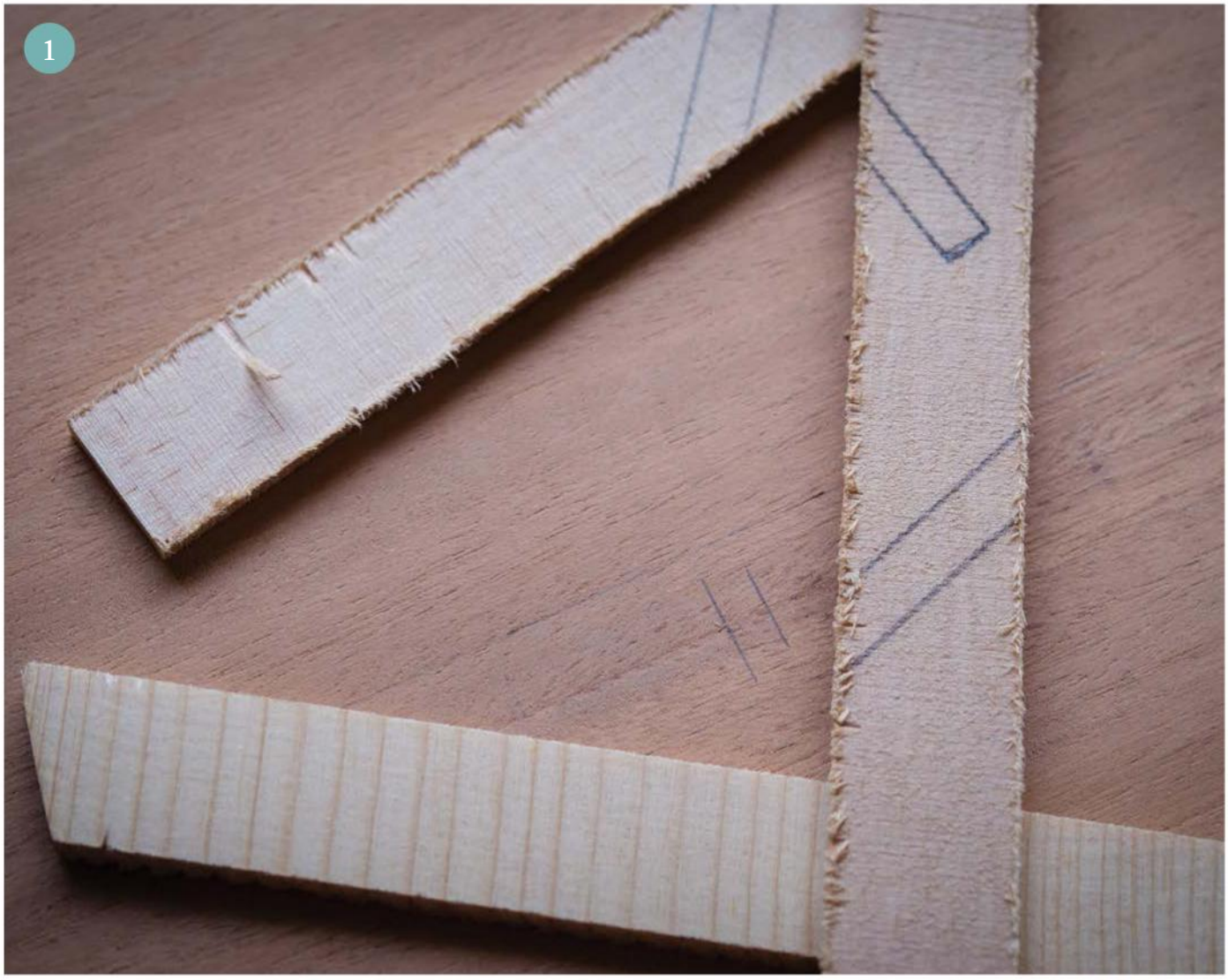
Offer ends **31 March 2018.** All USA orders are handled by our North American partner, IMS News, so that you can call at local rates, in your hours and pay in US Dollars.

DIY WORKSHOP

MARTIN GUITAR KIT BUILD

PART THREE

Turning our attention back to our Martin kit build, it's time to look at the all-important top and back bracing. **HUW PRICE** has some important decisions to make and takes inspiration from a pre-war design...



1 The spruce strips provided for the back grafts will need a lot of cleaning up before they can be used

When we last looked at our Martin acoustic kit build back at the tail end of 2017, I joined the back, levelled the kerfing and even popped the bracing in the oven for a bit of at-home torrefaction. Now it's time to return to the bracing, and with that comes a few important decisions that I'll have to make.

Few guitar builders will take the risk of leaving the joined back plates without back graft strips – strips of wood with the grain running perpendicular to the back plates are glued over the back's join line for reinforcement.

To avoid wastage, the Martin kit's back graft strips have been rough cut from scrapped spruce tops, and it's possible to see pencil marks for brace positioning on a few of them. The edges are very rough, so my first task is to try and clean them up using a sanding block. Once the edges are smooth, I roll over them and line up the selected strips on the back.

Gluing back grafts can be problematic, because several clamps with very deep jaws would be needed. Instead it's common to use something called a 'go bar deck', which usually comprises rigid top and bottom plates held together by long corner pieces. The work is placed on the bottom plate and flexible rods – also known as go bars – are fitted between the work and the top plate to press down on the pieces being glued.

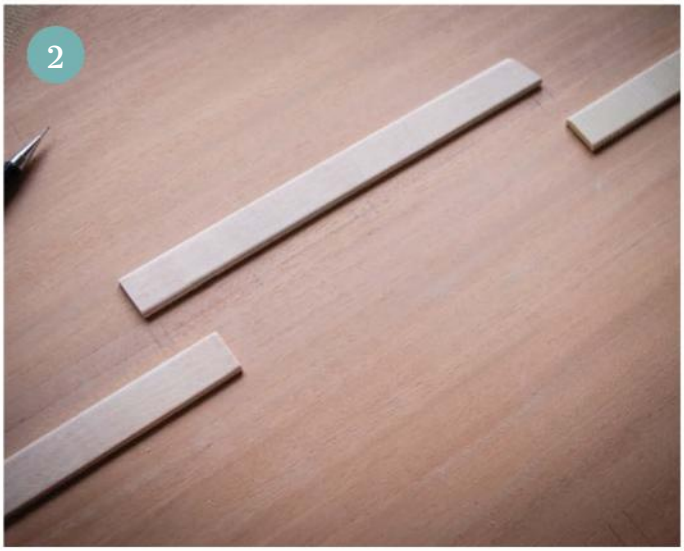
You can improvise something similar using your kitchen work surface and wall cupboards, with dowel rods serving as go bars – it looks a bit Heath Robinson, but it works! Just make sure that you place something between the rods and the parts you're clamping so the rods don't damage the wood. I apply hide glue to the grafts and after a few hours, remove the rods.

Notch Out

Having glued the grafts across the brace lines, notches must be made to fit the braces. Using the pencil marks provided by Martin for reference, I place the first brace in position and clamp it down at each end. With a sharp pencil, I mark each side onto the back graft where the brace crosses and unclamp the brace.

Using a very fine-toothed saw, I make two cuts through the back graft and stop just short of the back plates. A narrow chisel makes light work of removing the wood and I use a narrow sanding block to clean up any wood shavings and glue residue.

The idea is to ensure that the braces fit tightly into the notches – but not too tight. It's better to



make them slightly too small and then gradually open them out. Once they push in with just a little gentle persuasion, the gap will be just right.

With all four notches done, again I use the go bars to glue the two braces across the lower bout.

Now we turn to the bracing, and with that comes a few important decisions to make

Then, because my improvised go bar deck has insufficient depth, I turn the back plates around to glue the two braces across the upper bout area.

Brace Yourself

Now I have to make what may turn out to be the most important decision of the kit build. It's well known that Martin's bracing style and positioning has undergone changes over the decades. Many of the revered pre-war Martins had what has become known as 'forward bracing'.

It acquired this name because, during the 1930s, Martin began back shifting the intersection of the X braces closer to the bridge and stopped scalloping the X and tone braces. Additionally, the angle of the X braces was narrowed from 100 to 98 degrees and the angle of the both tone braces behind the bridge also changed.

Consequently, the newer X braces pass under the bridge below the ends of the saddle. With forward bracing, the X braces pass under the outer 'ears' of the bridge. This requires a wider bridge plate to be fitted because although the brace positions may be different, the bridge position stays the same.

The back-shifted bracing stiffened the top, making it better able to cope with the pull of the heavy steel strings that had become standard by the late 1930s. It also ensured that Martin would be less inundated with warranty repairs.

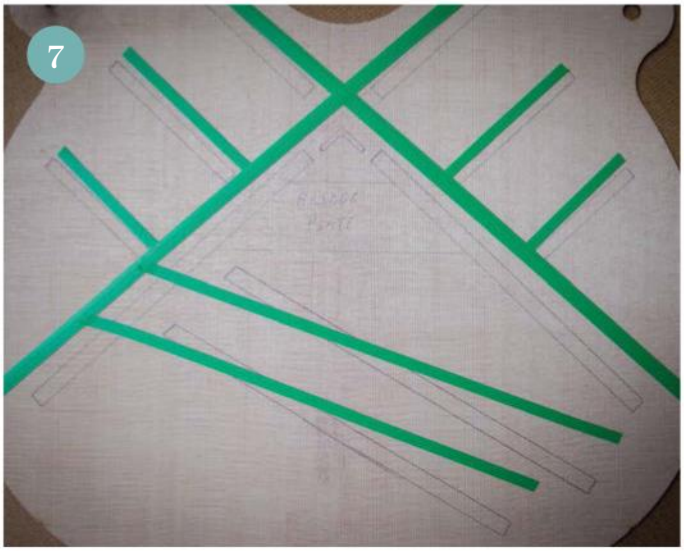
The downside was that the later bracing pattern made the guitars quieter and less dynamically responsive. This is one of the major factors behind the vogue for vintage Martins that developed during the folk boom of the early 1960s. Eventually Martin acknowledged this and many of today's vintage-style Martins feature pre-war forward-shifted scalloped bracing – with

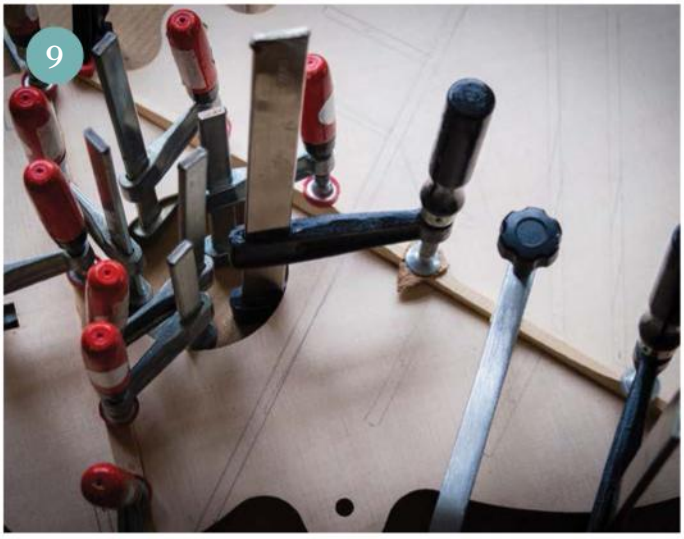
2 After cleaning up, the grafts are positioned along the back's join line

3 We improvise some go bars with some dowel rods and a pile of back issues of a well-known quality guitar magazine...

4 The lines show where the brace will cross the back graft

5 Having been notched out, the back graft is ready for the brace





6 Called an 'Henkogram' after its inventor, a light source inside this 1930s Martin reveals pre-war brace positions

7 The pencil marks show Martin's modern bracing pattern and the green lines represent the pre-war bracing style

8 Vintage brace positions have been marked out and the modern bracing marks erased to avoid confusion

9 Clamps are used to glue the first X brace and the upper face brace simultaneously

the caveat that you should use light gauge strings.

Our kit arrived with the top marked out for newer-style bracing, and none of the braces are scalloped. So, the issue is whether to build as supplied, or customise it for in an attempt to achieve a more vintage tone.

I decide on the latter, but I don't have the bracing pattern for a vintage Martin to refer to. Thankfully, Lucky Fret Music offered a 1932 000-28 for me to examine, but how can you create an accurate bracing template without dismantling the guitar?

The trick is to place a light source inside the guitar body and block the soundhole with something black. Next, draw the curtains, or close your blinds, and turn off your lights to make the room as dark as possible. For obvious reasons, it's best to do this at night. If the light source inside the guitar is strong enough, the top will glow and the braces should show up.

Pieces of low-tack masking tape are placed onto the body at the ends of all the braces and at junction points along the X. Taking a pencil, I mark all the brace positions onto the tape and turn the lights back on.

The pencil lines are then drawn over with a black marker pen to add intensity. With a body outline traced onto four sheets of A4 paper, I place it over the body. The reference lines on the masking tape show through and I mark the brace locations onto the template. From there I merely connect the lines and within minutes I have a very accurate 1930s Martin bracing template.

Changing Patterns

To transfer the vintage bracing layout onto the kit's spruce top, I lay my paper template over the top and mark the end positions of the 1930s braces onto the spruce. Again I join the dots, so to speak, and to compare the two patterns I highlight the 30s bracing with some green tape.

The modern bracing pattern markings are removed with a pencil eraser and some light sanding to prevent confusion when I'm gluing. At this point I also decide to use some X braces left over from a previous acoustic build project.

The notches in Martin's main braces were cut for the narrower angle, and the looseness of the joint causes some concern. The leftover braces are pre-scalloped and the crossover notch is already cut for the wider pre-war bracing. Since they're 10-year-old leftovers from a slot-head 000 kit, I don't feel any need to bake them like I did with the new ones.

The Guitar Magazine

MASTERCLASS SERIES 2018

DARREL HIGHAM

22 FEBRUARY

DINGWALLS, CAMDEN

- Live performance
- Rockabilly guitar tutorial
- Q&A with Darrel
- VIP meet and greet

VIP & STANDARD available now!

Brought to you by Allianz

BOOK NOW! WWW.EVENTIM.CO.UK/MASTERCLASS

The length of the X braces makes it hard to use the go bars, so I use regular clamps for gluing up. Having the soundhole makes it easy to get the clamps where you want them, and I'm able to glue the upper face brace at the same time.

Once the second X brace and 'popsicle' brace are attached, I use go bars to fix both tone bars, with a single clamp on each finger brace. Three thin soundhole braces are also glued on. For these, I don't bother with clamps, because hide glue pulls the pieces together as it sets – so it's basically self-clamping.

Having built some acoustics previously, I have three bridge clamps and they're one of the few specialist tools it's hard to do without. Here I use them to glue a wider bridge plate made from a scrap of maple. Before gluing, the ends of the finger braces, tone braces and bridge plate all have to be angled to fit tightly against the

X braces. I rely on my template for the initial cuts then make things exact with a square sided sanding block.

Finding Your Voice

This is where things really start to get exciting – or daunting, depending on your point of view. It's time to shape and modify the braces to get the top and back plates resonating like drum skins. This is a process called tap tuning and it's regarded as a key skill in acoustic guitar building.

Berkshirte luthier Dave King mentored me through my first acoustic build, but when it came to tap tuning, he told me it was just something you develop an instinct for over time. Back then, I suspected he was fobbing me off and telling me to figure it out the hard way just like he had. Several years later, I realise he was merely being honest!

Tap tuning involves removing material from the braces to loosen the top and back in order to promote vibration and enhance tone. However, if you take away too much of the bracing material, the guitar may end up sounding indistinct and boomy, and in a worst-case scenario, its structural integrity may be compromised.

> When it comes to tap tuning, it's just something that you develop an instinct for over time

You can find tap tuning video tutorials online and few are better than one from US boutique maker, Dana Bourgeois. I'm certainly not qualified to instruct anybody on the subject, as quite frankly, I'm still winging it on this guitar and trusting my instinct as Dave instructed!

However, I can give you an overview of the process I'm following. Starting with the back braces, I use a very sharp chisel to shave the sides until the rounded tops become sharp peaks. By removing material from the sides of the braces rather than the top, they become lighter and looser without losing strength. I also taper down the ends so they end up only a few millimetres above the back plates.

As I progress I can hear the back getting more ringy when I tap it. Try to find a nodal point to pinch the back between your thumb and index finger. When you hit the spot, tapping the back with the fleshy part of your middle finger should produce a series of clear notes across the surface. Here I'm just trying to get the back sounding musical while doing a neat job of carving.

10 **Pre-carving, this back brace is rounded along the top**

11 **Wood is removed from the side of the back brace to make it lighter without losing strength**

12 **After carving, the back brace is brought to a sharp peak all along its length**

13 A linen patch soaked in hide glue is placed over the X intersection in the vintage Martin style

14 Before carving, the finger braces are square in cross section

15 Carving the tapers and the peak dramatically changes the finger braces

I'm certainly not trying to achieve specific notes or intervals.

Voicing the top is a little more involved because there are so many braces of different sizes and shapes. In addition to shaving some of the brace sides to a peak, I'm also using Martin's pre-war technique of scalloping.

My recycled X braces give me a head start since they're already scalloped in the area behind the X intersection and I glue a round linen patch over the intersection. The lengths beyond the X are tapered rather than scalloped and I leave those as they are.

I begin by shaping the four finger braces, tapering one end to meet the X braces and the other to feather into the top. With a nice ramp at each end, I shave the sides to bring the high spots to a sharp peak.

Like the kit X braces, both tone bar braces arrived un-scalloped. So, I set about tapering the ends, carving the scallops and sharpening the peaks. At this point I'm pretty much copying pictures of vintage Martin bracing and the procedures I've observed in online demos.

All the while I'm tapping the top while suspending it from nodal points. You have to hunt for them but when you find one, it will allow the top will ring when tapped rather than dampen

the vibration. As I remove wood from the braces, I can feel and hear the top loosening up. Notes ring clearer, sound purer and there are more of them.

In a surprisingly short amount of time I get to the point where my instinct tells me to stop. Both the top and back are ringing, even when they're merely being handled. Using my chisel and sandpaper, I clean up the rough spots and glue squeeze out and I'm finally ready to glue the body together. I'll be covering that and much more in the next kit build instalment.

16 These tone bar braces are un-scalloped and therefore inconsistent with our vintage bracing modification

17 Carving the tone brace scallops makes a clearly audible change to the tap tones we get from the top

NEXT MONTH...

Huw returns to his Greco single-cut, and it's time to make this Goldtop-wannabe shine...

CRIMSON
Guitar Building Courses

Pricing from £210
No prior experience or tools needed
Learn to build in the heart of Dorset
crimsonguitars.com
01300 348863

All About... Les Paul

Lester Polsfuss was much more than the iconic guitar that came to bear his name. Les Paul was also a musical pioneer and a recording trailblazer. **HUW PRICE** examines the life of a true innovator...

If ever there was a figure in the guitar world who was deserving of the title 'renaissance man', it was Lester William Polsfuss. At various times during his life, Les could have listed his occupations as guitar virtuoso, radio presenter, guitar builder, pioneering audio engineer, record producer, inventor, TV star, hit-maker, studio designer, electronics engineer and hugely successful performing artist. He even came up with the idea of a musical alter ego about 35 years before David Bowie dreamed up Ziggy Stardust.

Born in 1915, Les began playing harmonica and soon graduated to guitar. As a teenager he built a harmonica holder so he could play guitar and harmonica simultaneously, and by age 13 he was already a semi-pro country singer and guitarist.

To get heard at venues, he wired a phonograph needle to his acoustic guitar and fed the signal to a radio speaker. Then to get himself heard even wider, he built his own radio transmitter and made a recording device from a Chevrolet flywheel to cut his own discs. He also experimented using a length of rail line to improve sustain. These early recording and guitar building experiments clearly weren't to be his last.

To get heard at venues, Les wired a phonograph needle to his acoustic and fed the signal to a radio speaker

Turning His Hand

The only thing Les was ever purist about was sound quality, so although his heart was in jazz, he was happy to play country under the names Red Hot Red and Rhubarb Red if he could earn a living from it. By 1934 he had relocated to Chicago, and was backing up artists signed to the Decca label. The first Rhubarb Red records followed in 1936, along with a name change to Les Paul.

Forming his own trio, with Chet Atkins' brother Jim on rhythm guitar, Les and his band moved to New York in 1938. Chet

Les Paul performing with his then-wife Mary Ford

Atkins recalled that a Gibson archtop given to his brother by Les became the first professional quality guitar he ever owned. Almost forty years later, Les and Chet would team up to record the Grammy Award winning album, *Chester & Lester*.

Having almost electrocuted himself while experimenting at home, Les recuperated at the same hospital where Charlie Christian was being treated for tuberculosis. Les relocated to Hollywood and was drafted into the Armed Forces Radio Network. While there he performed under his own name and played for superstars such as Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters. The association with Crosby continued with Les' trio backing him on a single that hit number one in 1945.

It's probably unfair to call Les accident-prone, but a 1948 car crash almost ended his career. His right elbow couldn't be rebuilt and doctors advised amputation. Instead Les had the arm set at almost 90 degrees so he could continue playing.

Big Time Lester

With his wife and new musical partner Mary Ford, Les really hit the big time. In addition to playing guitar, Les clowned around while Mary, no slouch on guitar herself, provided lead vocals. In 1951 alone the duo sold four million records and were earning over $20,000 per week – equivalent to around $100,000 today. Their TV show ran from 1953 until 1960, by which point rock 'n' roll had put paid to Les and Mary's brand of folksy light entertainment.

The duo continued touring, but divorced in 1964 and Les, already a wealthy man, went into semi-retirement. Over the next few decades he recorded sporadically, but not without critical and commercial success, and was awarded his last Grammy in 2006, at the grand old age of 90.

His decades-long Monday night residency at Fat Tuesdays in Manhattan became a popular attraction for visiting guitar fans. Periodically youngsters like Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Steve Howe and his godson, Steve Miller, would pop in to jam with their hero, just as Les had done with his heroes Eddie Lang and Django Reinhardt.

Les's Other Life

In 2009, at the age of 94, Les succumbed to pneumonia complications and the music world lost a true giant. His time as a superstar may have been relatively short and the music he created is very much of its era, so why should he be regarded as such? Simply put, Les lived a parallel existence out of the spotlight and his contributions to guitar design and modern recording techniques even eclipse his considerable achievements as an artist.

Les' name – like Kleenex and Hoover – has become synonymous with a particular product. Every guitarist knows what a Les Paul is, even if they don't know who Les Paul was. Although Les didn't invent the solidbody guitar, as some have suggested, he was certainly influential in popularising them.

Logging On

His teenage experiments with railway lines demonstrate that Les understood that a solid core was needed to promote sustain, add brightness and effectively cure feedback. However, 24 inches of solid steel rail track was clearly not a viable option.

Instead Les cut up an old Epiphone archtop body, attached a Gibson neck to a four-inch square block of pine and grafted on the body 'wings' with metal brackets. With two pickups that Les wound himself, it

NEED VALVES?

"Bring Back The Power!"

Restore the vitality and sparkle to your guitar amplifier with a new set of valves.

For your new preamp and power valves, visit:

www.ampvalves.co.uk

Ampvalves

Unit 12 Tilbury Close
Caversham, Reading
Berks. RG4 5JF

Tel: 07979 687404

looked like a total lash up... but it worked!

Although Les demonstrated his musical craftsmanship with his meticulously produced recordings, he was savvy enough to realise his limitations as a luthier, and he wasn't about to start a guitar company. Instead he approached Gibson in 1941 to try and sell them on the idea. He was met with ridicule and the Gibson guys referred to Les as "that weirdo and his broomstick".

Les carried on using his famous Log on stage and in the studio through the 1940s, along with a headless solid aluminium guitar he designed and built, with tuner keys protruding from the body. It looks like a cross between a Klein and a Steinberger and you can hear its distinctive tone on *Somebody Loves Me* recorded in 1947. Unfortunately, the design proved problematic under hot stage lights.

He approached Gibson in 1941, but the Gibson guys referred to Les as "that weirdo and his broomstick"

Then out of the blue, Les got an unexpected call. By 1952 Gibson had been shaken out of its complacency by Fender's success, and the rest is history. Les collaborated on the design and tested various prototypes, some of which still exist. Even so, Gibson was remained reluctant to take advice and, contrary to Les's wishes, the Les Pauls produced in 1952 and 1953 had a shallow neck angle and the ill-conceived under-wrapped trapeze tailpiece.

The Garage Years

But Les' greatest and most lasting achievements were made in studio recording and production. Expressing his dissatisfaction with the sound of his own records to Bing Crosby, Bing suggested building his own studio. Before long Les had set up one in the garage of his house on North Curson Avenue, Hollywood. Never one to put finesse before practicality, artists were required to climb in through a window because there was no door.

He began experimenting with microphone placement, establishing the practice of close mic'ing to enhance detail and presence. This way of recording has been the industry-standard ever since. Working with acetate disk cutters rather than tape, he would record a part onto disc and then play along with the recording to create a second recording on a different disc. The basic principle of this sound-on-sound technique is known today as overdubbing.

What's more, Les discovered he could loop the original sound back off the disk to create feedback, and he varied disc speed to create harmonies, bizarre octave effects and apparently supersonic speed. The track *Lover* from 1948 is so bizarre that comic legend WC Fields told him, "My boy, you sound like an octopus".

Les had been experimenting with sound-on-sound since the 1930s, so he naturally continued exploring this after moving over to tape recording. In 1952 he invented flanging, which featured on the track *Mammy's Boogie*. However multi-track tape recording is surely Les's most lasting innovation.

Multiple Personalities

Overdubbing on a single tape machine was basically impossible, because of the inevitable time delay caused by having separate record and playback heads. Les proposed solving the problem by merging the heads into a single unit.

Working with Ross Snyder to design an eight-track tape machine, the first multi-track recorder was built for Les by Ampex in 1957 and he ordered an eight-channel mixer from Rein Narma to go with it. Les Paul had, in effect, created the template for the modern recording studio.

Not all his projects worked out and his advice in an interview with Greg Hofmann was, "If you work on something and it's coming to you hard, shove it in the corner". Judging by the sheer quantity of dismantled instruments and non-functioning recording equipment deposited around his home after Les died, he meant it literally.

In the same interview, published in January 1988, it's clear that Les had kept himself up to date. He offered prescient insights on synthesis and telling appraisals of hot-shots such as Eddie Van Halen, Al Di Meola and Stanley Jordan. However, his unyielding enthusiasm for low-impedance pickups remains largely unshared.

Although few listen to Les's music these days, his association with Gibson ensures his name will never be forgotten, and many of the recording techniques and practices he pioneered are just as relevant in the digital world as they were in the analogue era. Not bad for a lad from Waukesha, Wisconsin.

WANTED

DEAD OR ALIVE

CASH REWARD

OLD AND VINTAGE GUITARS & EQUIPMENT BOUGHT, SOLD AND TRADED

IF CAPTURED, PLEASE DELIVER TO:

OLD HAT GUITARS
47 East Street, Horncastle,
Lincolnshire, LN9 6AA
Tel: 01507 525327
07850 802 219
www.oldhatguitars.com

Chord Clinic

Throwing a suspended chord into the mix is a great way to add movement to a major chord sequence. **ROD FOGG** sees if he can handle the suspense...

There is probably still plenty of mileage left in the good old open C major chord but many artists try to add interest and movement to open string chord sequences by using suspensions. There are two kinds of suspension, normally shortened to 'sus'; sus2 where the third of a major chord is lowered a whole tone, and sus4 where it is raised a semi-tone.

Taking a look at figure 1 you can see that in the first chord, Csus4, the note F on the D string is the fourth above the root; hence the '4' underneath the diagram where we spell out note names and intervals. We get the F by raising the third, E, a semitone, and it resolves back down to E in the next chord, C major. The third diagram uses the open D string to bring the sus2 into the chord, and ideally you should play the C major chord again after that, giving you a four chord sequence.

An interesting thing about suspended chords is that they often seem to want to go back to the chord from which they are derived rather than progressing onto some other chord. Sus chords also have a satisfyingly open quality with an added touch of dissonance between either the fourth and fifth

Figure 1

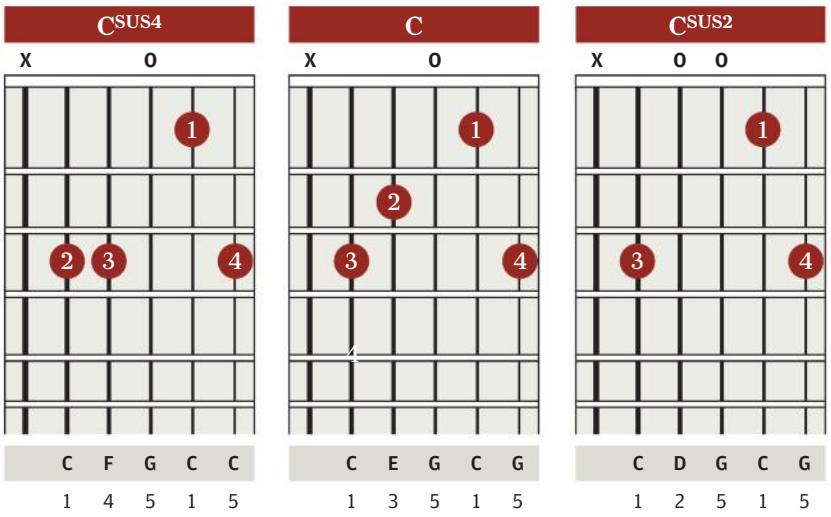
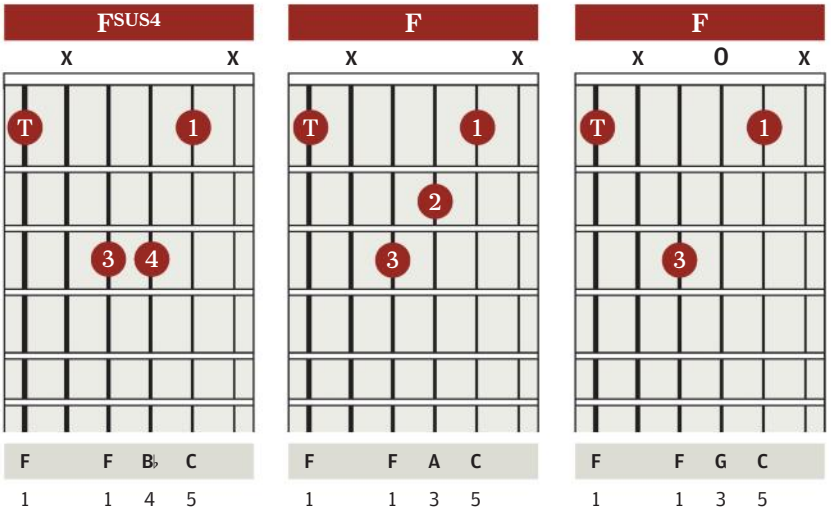


Figure 2



or the root and second. Resolving a sus chord to its major partner is entirely optional – there are many examples of songs where sus chord follows sus chord with no resolution to the major chord.

Moving on to figure 2 we find we are in the key of F, using a "thumb over" style. Mute the A string with the tip of the thumb or the tip of the third finger, and mute the top E string with the underside of the first finger, giving you a tidy four note voicing. To create a longer chord sequence try following figure 1 with figure 2. Notice that finger one stays in the same place for both chords sequences, so keep it down.

It would be useful to be able to play chord sequences like this in any key without using a capo – enter figure 3, which shifts things up to D major around the fifth fret with a set of movable shapes. We have provided two versions of the Dsus2 chord; the second one is an awkward fingering but it is included just in case you are unhappy with the sudden appearance of the high A on the top string in the previous voicing. This version maintains the integrity of the voice leading; try swapping fingers one and two around as some players find that to be a more satisfactory fingering.

In figure 4 we continue our pursuit of movable shapes, this time with the root note on the D string, and taking things to the key of G major. This voicing of Gsus4 means stopping two strings with your fourth finger, and if you are moving onto G major it's a good idea to prepare finger three so that you just have to stand finger four up on the B string. Now that you have seen a few sus chords it's time for this month's theory moment because one sus chord can look much like another; Csus4 contains the notes C, F and G, and Fsus2 contains the notes F,G and C. In other words, they are the same, but what you call them depends on entirely on which note is in the bass.

Figure 3

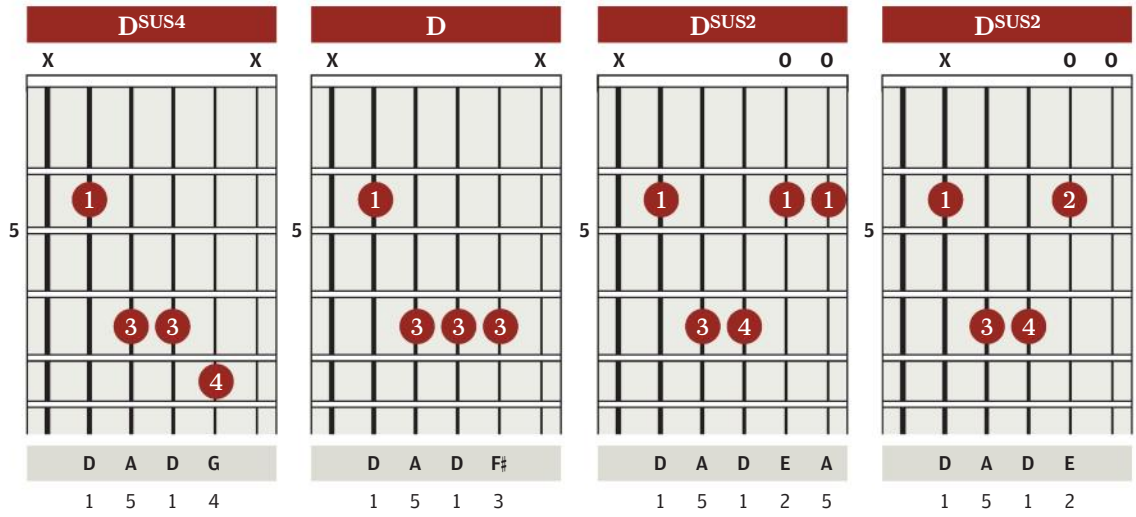


Figure 4

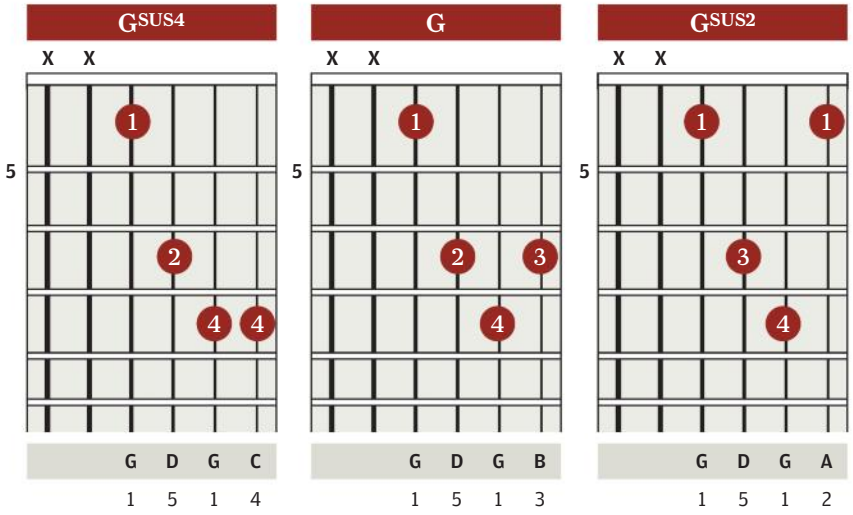
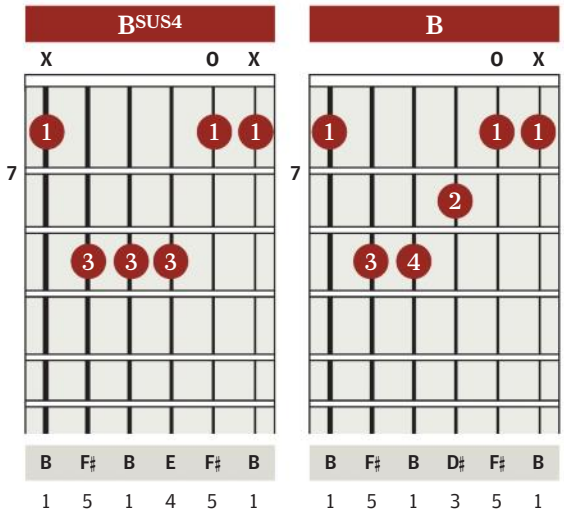


Figure 5



If you can make a six-string barre while also stopping three strings with your third finger you can tackle figure 5 with its *Pinball Wizard*-inspired meatyness. Since a sus2 is not possible in this voicing figure 6 removes some doubling and creates four-note voicings, this time including a sus2. These shapes are not unlike those in figure 2. Try reworking them with fingers one to four – it's good to have alternative fingerings under your belt.

Take a second look at figure 6 and you'll see that the root note is doubled on the sixth and fourth strings. Figure 7 loses the root note to arrive at a three-note voicing, which requires some careful muting. Arpeggios work well here and you should also try restoring the root note to the D string and leaving out the E string for a more closely spaced voicing. More chordy goodness next month!

Figure 6

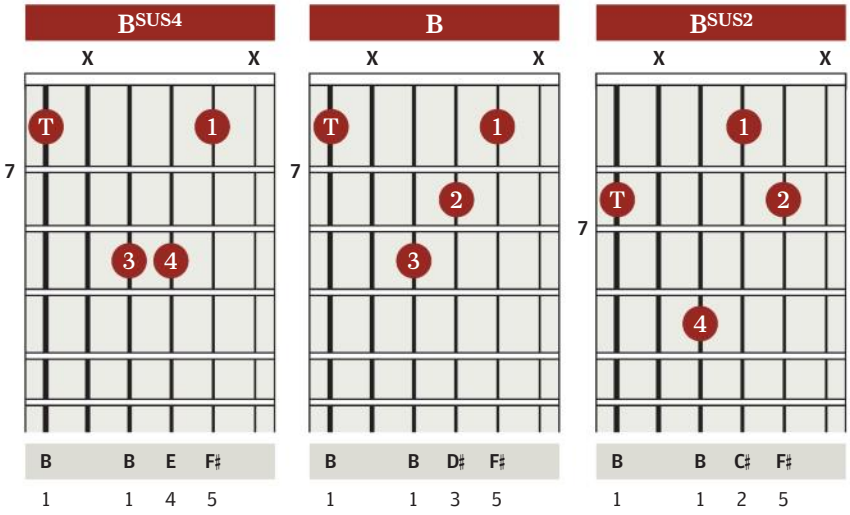
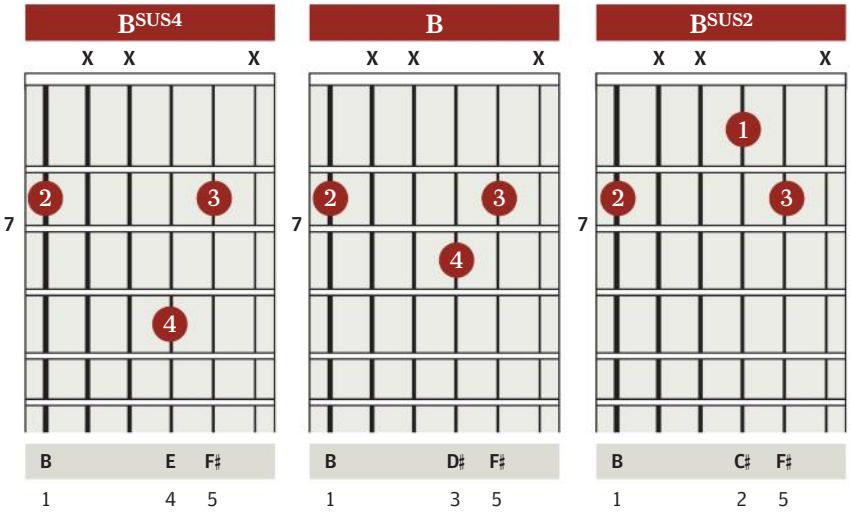


Figure 7



To advertise, call **Joe Supple +44 (0) 1225 489987**

JAG
John Anthony Guitars

Cayton, Scarborough
North Yorkshire
England
01723 586822

BAYTONE

BEAUTIFUL, HAND BUILT GUITAR PICKUPS

GUITAR MAKING PLANS AND PRODUCTS

PARTS AND RESOURCES
BESPOKE GUITARS
REPAIRS AND CUSTOMISATION

www.johnanthonyguitars.com

www.myguitars4u.com

My collection of Vintage Guitars, Basses & Amplifiers are for sale. Full details & photos on my website.

2005 Gibson Les Paul Standard, 2001 Gibson Firebird V, 1973 Fender Strat, 1997 PRS Custom 24 Ten Top Birds, 1977 Fender Jazz Bass Natural, 1977 Precision Bass are just some of the guitars on my website all fully set up.

www.myguitars4u.com
Tel: 07889 912921

Beginner to Boutique
One to One Service
Sensibly Priced
High Quality Used Guitars
Honesty and Integrity

Austin Guitars

Based in Kirkby, Liverpool, is a family run business dedicated to the provision of top quality new and used guitars.

Check out our latest arrivals at:
www.austinguitars.co.uk

Or email:
sales@austinguitars.co.uk

Keep up to date, follow us on Twitter:
@austinguitarsuk

Fast delivery nationwide

Showroom available by appointment

If you are looking to buy, sell or trade get in touch
0151 374 2459
07730 409 841

Rob Williams
Custom Guitars

Professional guitar building
Repairs & Restorations

30 years of experience
at your service.

Newtown, Powys
Mid Wales
Tel; 01686 689120

www.robwilliamsguitars.co.uk
www.facebook.com/robwilliamsguitars

Darrel Higham

The UK rockabilly ace on Gretsches, cleaning windows and why you probably shouldn't take your dog on tour...

1 I couldn't live without my...
"My 2008 Gretsch 6120 Custom Shop built by Stephen Stern. Best guitar I've ever played."

2 In another life I'd have been...
"Good question! I probably would've carried on working for my Dad's window cleaning firm. Much as I liked cleaning windows, I liked playing the guitar more!"

3 The moment it all started...
"I think it was in 1992 when I went over to the US to work with Eddie Cochran's road band, The Kelly Four. It was working with those guys that made me realise you could make a living playing music."

4 The one that got away...
"My first Gretsch 6120 was stolen back in 1998 from a venue in Melton Mowbray. I'd love to get that back. It was a 1989 Nashville model that I modified to look a bit more like Eddie Cochran's. The serial number is 898120w, if memory serves..."

5 My Spinal Tap moment...
"There's been many over the years... I think my favourite one was when we used to take our dog, Alf, a border collie, to the gigs with us. We were supporting Jeff Beck and Alf got on very well with the caterer because he was always feeding Alf little pieces of food all the time. But he walked into the dressing room after the gig to collect some plates and forgot to knock and Alf nearly pinned him to the floor! Poor bloke."

6 The best advice that I've ever been given...
"Working with The Kelly Four was a great experience. These guys were in their 50s and I was 22 years old at the time. So they could advise me on so much. It really was an education. I also remember a mate telling me once to always dress better than the audience! Can't say I manage that all the time but I do my best..."

7 The first thing I play when I pick up a guitar...
"I usually run through some Cliff Gallop and Eddie Cochran licks. If I'm feeling adventurous, I might try some Merle Travis finger pickin'."

8 The most important thing on your rider...
"I'm just thrilled when we get one, to be honest with you, which isn't that often!"

9 My guilty pleasure...
"I don't have any musical guilty pleasures. Everything I like is brilliant as far as I'm concerned!"

10 If I could play one thing...
"Not songs as such but rather styles of music I wish I could play. Like blues or country chicken pickin'. I love listening to them but really can't play them well at all. It's a feel thing, I think. You've got to really want to learn something in order to do it properly."

Darrel Higham opens the Guitar Masterclass Series 2018 on 22 February in London – purchase tickets now at bit.ly/2BV9APQ

BACK TO THE TRUTH

MAYBACH LESTER SERIES

Legendary sound. Classic design.
Handcrafted in Europe.

MAYBACH

iMusicnetwork e.K. • Am Rehberg 15 • D-97268 Kirchheim • www.maybach-guitars.de

Design: www.thieme-markendesign.de

HT VENUE SERIES

MkII

THE **VALVE AMP** REDEFINED...

MORE REFINED CLEANS

MORE RESPONSIVE OVERDRIVES

MORE FLEXIBILITY

MORE CONTROL

MORE FEATURES

MORE PRO RECORDING OPTIONS

MORE COMPACT AND PORTABLE

#MOREISMORE

Blackstar®
AMPLIFICATION

the sound in your head

Designed & Engineered
by Blackstar Amplification UK

Find your nearest dealer at
www.blackstaramps.com

The Guitar Magazine

Waves of Sound

The inside story of Taylor's game-changing new V-Class bracing

Waves of Sound

CONTENTS

Waves Of Sound 04
Charting the birth and development of V-Class bracing with the help of Taylor Guitars design guru Andy Powers

Taylor Builder's Edition K14ce Koa 12
Our in-depth review of one of the first Taylor guitars to feature the new V-Class bracing system

Wood For The Trees 22
Bob Taylor on the company's impressive sustainability projects and the future of Taylor Guitars

Anthem Publishing
Suite 6 Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath BA1 6PL
Tel **+44 (0) 1225 489984**
Email **theguitarmagazine@anthem-publishing.com**
www.theguitarmagazine.com

Editor **Chris Vinnicombe**
chris.vinnicombe@anthem-publishing.com
Art Editor **John Thackray**
john.thackray@anthem-publishing.com
Managing Editor **Josh Gardner**
josh.gardner@anthem-publishing.com
Senior Product Specialist **Huw Price**
Photography **Eleanor Jane, Chris Vinnicombe, Chuck Schmid, Taylor Guitars**

GET IN TOUCH

Facebook
facebook.com/theguitarmagazine

YouTube
youtube.com/theguitarmagazine

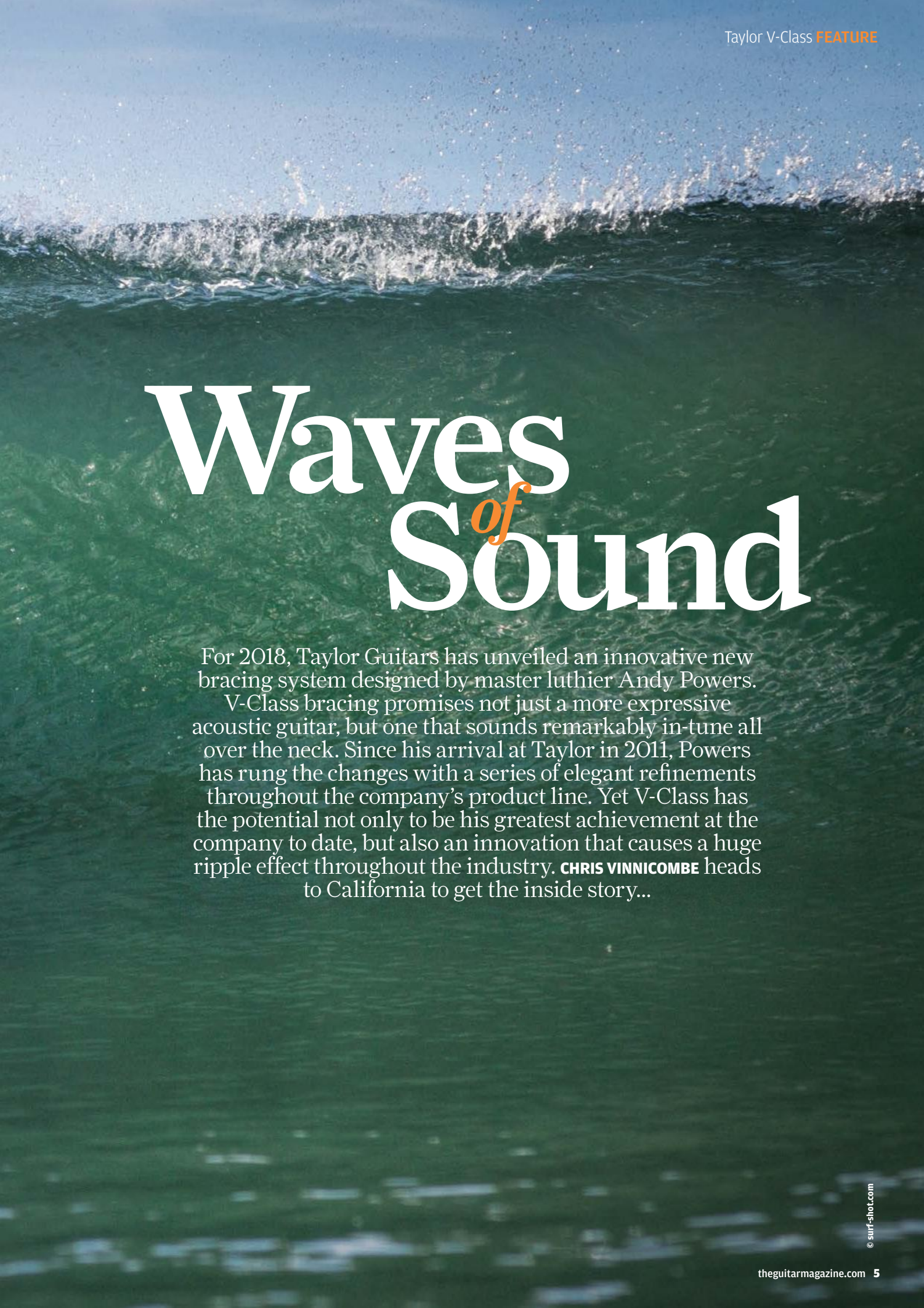
Twitter
@guitarmagazine

Instagram
@theguitarmagazine

Email theguitarmagazine@anthem-publishing.com

SUBSCRIBE

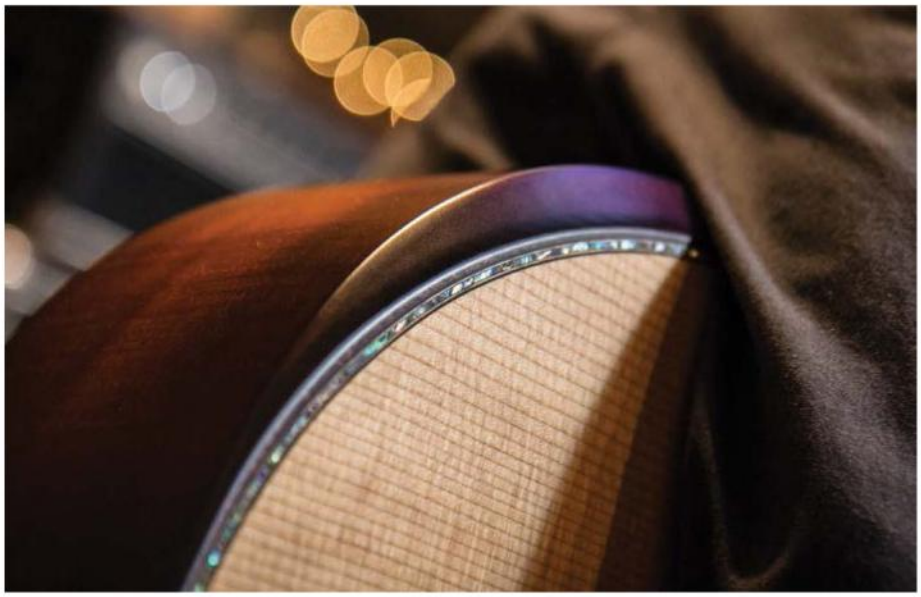
Visit **www.theguitarmagazine.com** to take advantage of this month's special *The Guitar Magazine* subscription offer



Waves *of* Sound

For 2018, Taylor Guitars has unveiled an innovative new bracing system designed by master luthier Andy Powers. V-Class bracing promises not just a more expressive acoustic guitar, but one that sounds remarkably in-tune all over the neck. Since his arrival at Taylor in 2011, Powers has rung the changes with a series of elegant refinements throughout the company's product line. Yet V-Class has the potential not only to be his greatest achievement at the company to date, but also an innovation that causes a huge ripple effect throughout the industry. **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** heads to California to get the inside story...

© surf-shot.com



Like many great moments of inspiration that take place in Southern California, it begins with a human being staring out into the ocean. The backdrop is the picture-postcard resort city of Carlsbad in San Diego County. One early morning following a storm, while Andy Powers is watching the surf, he notices the waves breaking around a stone jetty and dividing into equal parts on either side.

It's at this point that Powers – chief designer at Taylor Guitars, Bob Taylor's anointed successor as the brand's creative lynchpin and a man who knows a thing or two hundred about building spectacular musical instruments – begins to sketch out the seed of an idea. It's an idea that will light the way out of what he believes to be the "design cul-de-sac" of X-bracing that, no matter how much every element of an acoustic guitar's construction is optimised, remains a compromise between volume and sustain.

Of course, it's not the first time that the SoCal environment has had a direct influence on innovation in the guitar business. Just as the candy-coloured curves of the automobiles that throbbed along the freeway bled into the design sensibilities of Messrs Fender, Tavares and Fullerton in the 1950s, so the ocean informs the luthiery of a guitar builder whose twin passions for surfing and woodworking have seen him construct prototype surfboards with redwood rails reclaimed from the studs of early 20th Century beach cottages.

It's easy to see why Bob Taylor found a kindred spirit in Powers – when Taylor needed abalone to inlay the fretboards of his first acoustic guitars all those years ago, he dived into the ocean and found it himself. A similarly intimate connection to the culture and landscape of San Diego was something that Taylor regarded as essential when he was searching for the person to spearhead the next generation of the company's guitars.

> V-Class bracing is an idea that will light the way out of what Powers believes to be the "design cul-de-sac" of X-bracing

More Barn

Traditionally, the world's leading guitar companies have always revealed their hand at the Winter NAMM Show, but we're 60 miles south of Anaheim, and the biggest – and noisiest – event in the musical instrument industry's calendar is still three months away. We've come to the much more tranquil

surroundings of Carlsbad in late October 2017 as part of a small group of European and North American guitar journalists to which Taylor Guitars is giving a "more immersive" experience. The idea is to provide insight and context for a revolutionary new development that the company clearly regards as a very big deal indeed.

So here we are in Andy's world, and it isn't half bad. An annual average of 263 days of sunshine is something we could probably get used to pretty quickly. This morning, it streams through the windows of the renovated barn adjacent to Powers' home, a property that he and his father – also a carpenter, guitarist, mandolin and dobro player – refurbished together.

The barn is partitioned into two large spaces. The first is a playroom for the youngest members of the Powers family and the second, a workshop. The toys that Andy gets to play with have been used to develop some of the finest instruments ever to bear

"We've spent a lot of time tweaking over the years. But sometimes, to really make an impactful change you have to consider an entirely different approach"

the Taylor logo. As we sit expectantly in the playroom area, Bob sets the scene.

One comment is particularly telling: "We've spent a lot of time tweaking a design to within an inch of its life to make incremental improvements over the years," Bob says. "But sometimes, to really make an impactful change, you have to consider an entirely different approach."

Inside The Box

And that's where Andy comes in. The X-bracing pattern has been the standard for flat-top, steel-string acoustics for a century. It's "a great example of compromise," he says, with various innovations and refinements over the years getting the absolute best out of a design that allows the top to move air while simultaneously providing enough resistance to movement to allow notes to sustain.

It's fair to say that X-braced guitars have featured on some pretty damn good records. But what if there was another way? As he stared into the surf on the morning of his Damascene moment, the ocean waves showed Powers how stiffness and flexibility could coexist without compromise.

Notebook sketches were followed by prototypes that, instead of being built around a crisscrossed X between the bridge and soundhole, featured a pair of longitudinal braces in a V pattern. This adds stiffness in the direction of the strings while – just like the waves hitting that stone jetty – energy is pushed outwards rather than being absorbed. Two pairs of fan braces govern the flexibility of the lower bout and impose order on the top's movement, resulting in a design capable of more volume *and* longer sustain.

This was already a big deal. But just like a family band on the back porch whose harmonies sound all the sweeter when bickering siblings have patched up their differences, the elegant simplicity and harmonious design of Andy's V-Class bracing also results in an instrument that sounds more in-tune. All over the fretboard.

Louder. Longer sustain. More in-tune. In the world of the acoustic guitar, this is holy grail stuff, right? We'll provide an in-

depth technical appraisal elsewhere in this publication, but after hearing a V-Class guitar in the capable hands of Mr Powers himself, we were then able to spend some time with a Builder's Edition K14ce model and judge for ourselves.

Outside The Box

The easy playability of the Taylor neck has long emboldened guitarists to venture out of cowboy country locales and approach the acoustic guitar more like you would an electric. And admittedly, our first encounter with V-Class bracing finds it on board a fantastically well made, modernistic instrument whose softened edges have an ergonomic appeal that makes picking up a more traditionally constructed acoustic feel like switching to the slab-body of a Telecaster after spending time hugging the curves of a Strat. But all caveats aside, the sonic experience offered by this V-Class guitar is utterly bewitching.

This instrument sounds remarkably in-tune. Notes linger, bloom and reverberate with shifting harmonics in a way that has parallels with a 1950s Gibson plugged into a frayed old tweed combo. Like other great guitars, the K14ce somehow disappears in your hands as the direct connection between the player and the music they are making invites voyages into uncharted territory. Note combinations that ordinarily leave a sour taste are suddenly so much sweeter and there's simply more creative headroom to explore.

Later that afternoon, we hear just how useful the instrument is in a recording context, as we journey from Andy's house down Highway 101 to an impressive studio facility owned by Grammy-winning San Diego rock band Switchfoot. Here, Grammy-winning guitarist, composer, and Taylor product specialist Wayne Johnson assists Powers in demonstrating how the V-Class

Note combinations that ordinarily leave a sour taste are suddenly so much sweeter and there's simply more creative headroom to explore

If you are playing alongside another guitarist, sounding this in-tune is a lot of fun. But on a practical level, if you're playing to pay the bills, during a studio session, a V-Class-equipped acoustic is far less likely to be the 'problem child' than a regular steel-string. Especially in a contemporary mix surrounded by an array of perfectly tuned sounds that are inorganic in origin.

guitar not only solves a lot of tuning issues in the studio but also provides a larger 'sweet spot' for microphone placement thanks to its formidable projection.

Powers explains how the V-Class bracing increases projection: "Each note has more harmonic coherence, a clearer identity," he reveals. "The frequencies or notes the guitar generates agree more with each other. The

wavelengths line up with each other in phase – picture wavy lines nestled together travelling the same way – and strengthen each other. Because those waves have the strength of multiples, they can travel farther."

An Instrument Of Change?

The great, lightning-in-a-bottle moments of revolution and innovation in music tend to spring from circumstances that are impossible to replicate. The world has turned and the way that Leo Fender or *Revolver* redrew the landscape of rock 'n' roll can never be repeated. But in a pop-culture climate that's far less binary, there are many more musical avenues to explore.

Andy Powers' ingenious design has the potential to create waves of its own, changing the way that luthiers approach the anatomy of the acoustic guitar and musicians compose and record music. Will V-Class prove to be a success? We'll answer that question in 30 years, but we wouldn't bet against it. Sit down and play a Taylor with V-Class bracing today and we're confident that you'll think it's a success already.

BEST IN CLASS

V-Class bracing features on a quartet of new-for-2018 guitars

Taylor's V-Class bracing rollout begins in the highest echelons of the company's catalogue and will initially be offered within the best-selling Grand Auditorium body style. Featured models include the Presentation Series PS14ce (sinker redwood top, striped West African ebony back/sides £9,479) the 914ce from the 900 series (Sitka spruce top, Indian rosewood back/sides £6,239) and the K24ce from the Koa Series (Hawaiian koa top, back and sides £5,279).

In celebration of the V-Class launch, Andy designed the ergonomic and player-friendly Builder's Edition K14ce with a torrefied spruce top and Hawaiian koa back and sides (£5,759). Read our in-depth review over the page. V-Class bracing will eventually be offered on other models but no timescale has been confirmed yet.

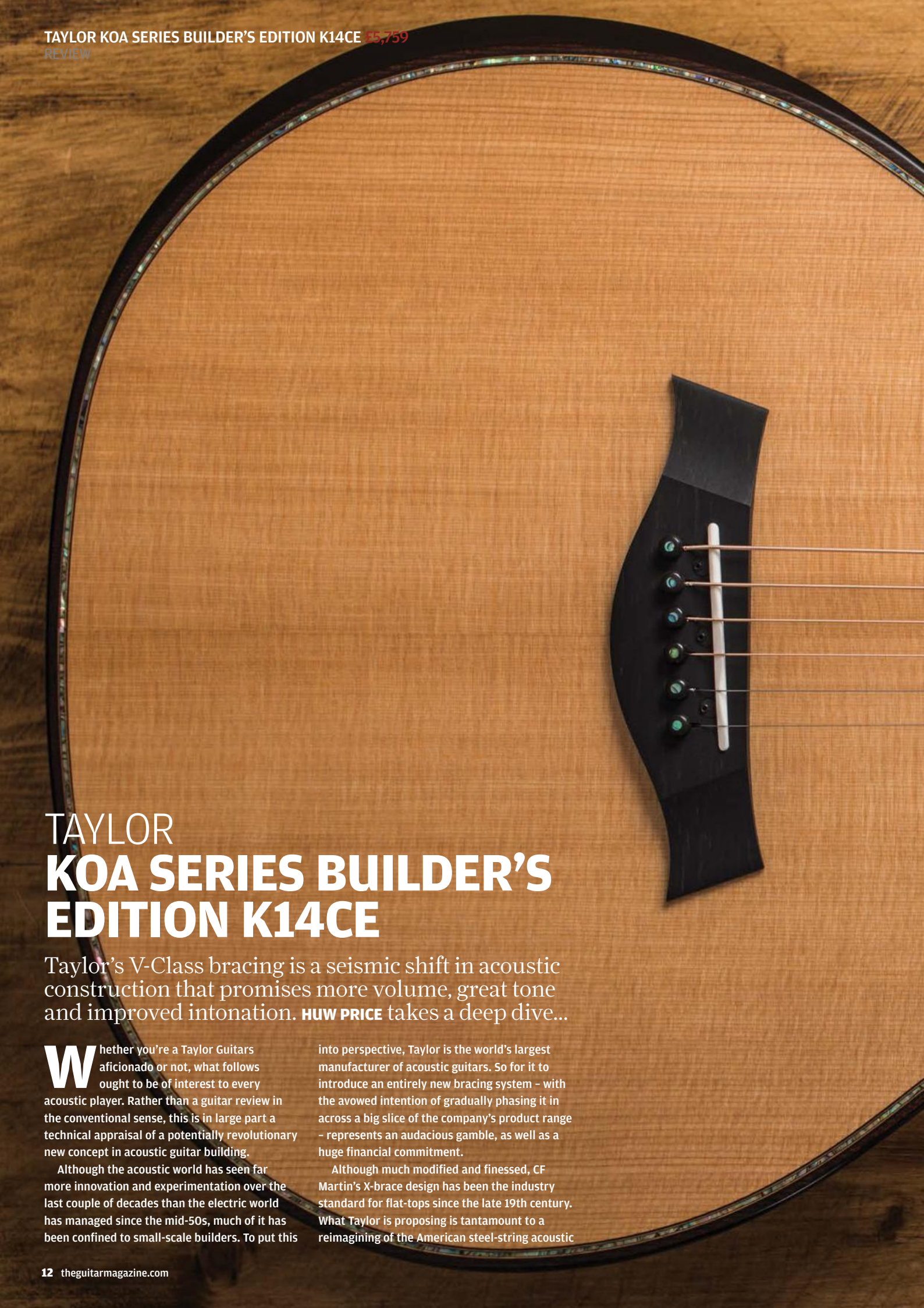
To avoid confusion with existing models, all of Taylor's V-Class guitars will be distinguished by two exclusive features: a new label inside the guitar featuring Andy's signature and a black graphite nut. The nut is an improved design that has a higher level of graphite in order to reduce friction, while the label also features Bob's signature incorporated into the background.

Taylor Builder's Edition K14ce

Taylor 914ce

Taylor K24ce Koa

Taylor PS14ce



TAYLOR KOA SERIES BUILDER'S EDITION K14CE

Taylor's V-Class bracing is a seismic shift in acoustic construction that promises more volume, great tone and improved intonation. **HUW PRICE** takes a deep dive...

Whether you're a Taylor Guitars aficionado or not, what follows ought to be of interest to every acoustic player. Rather than a guitar review in the conventional sense, this is in large part a technical appraisal of a potentially revolutionary new concept in acoustic guitar building.

Although the acoustic world has seen far more innovation and experimentation over the last couple of decades than the electric world has managed since the mid-50s, much of it has been confined to small-scale builders. To put this into perspective, Taylor is the world's largest manufacturer of acoustic guitars. So for it to introduce an entirely new bracing system – with the avowed intention of gradually phasing it in across a big slice of the company's product range – represents an audacious gamble, as well as a huge financial commitment.

Although much modified and finessed, CF Martin's X-brace design has been the industry standard for flat-tops since the late 19th century. What Taylor is proposing is tantamount to a reimagining of the American steel-string acoustic

guitar. If it proves as successful and popular as Taylor hopes, the guitar featured here may be seen as historically significant in years to come.

Now, if you're thinking 'if it ain't broke...', you'd have a fair point. There is nothing intrinsically 'wrong' with X-braced acoustics, and most acoustic builders will acknowledge that it's a superbly effective compromise. A guitar top has to be strong and stiff enough to withstand the considerable pull of a set of strings, yet light and flexible enough to vibrate freely and produce a loud and musically pleasing tone.

If it's too light and flexible the strings will pull the top apart, but if it's too rigid, volume and tone will be adversely effected. This means there is an optimal region where the flexibility versus stiffness balance is about right. Yet within that region there are other comprises to consider – specifically the trade-off between volume and sustain.

In a nutshell, a structurally sound top on the ultra-light and flexible end of the spectrum will produce notes with great amplitude but less sustain. Andy Powers offers the banjo as an extreme example, where the top itself very quickly absorbs most of the string's energy after an initial volume spike. The other end of the spectrum would be a solidbody electric, that sustains far longer but produces very little acoustic volume.

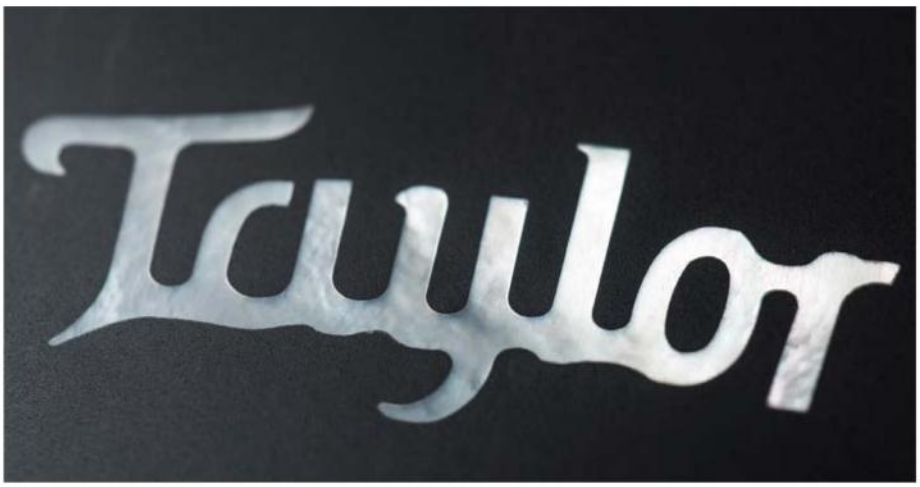
Throughout his guitar-building career, Andy Powers has been on a quest to improve sustain while maintaining or even increasing the volume of his acoustics. Eventually he had to acknowledge that he had reached a "design cul-de-sac" with regard to the X-braces and to progress further, a radical re-think was required.

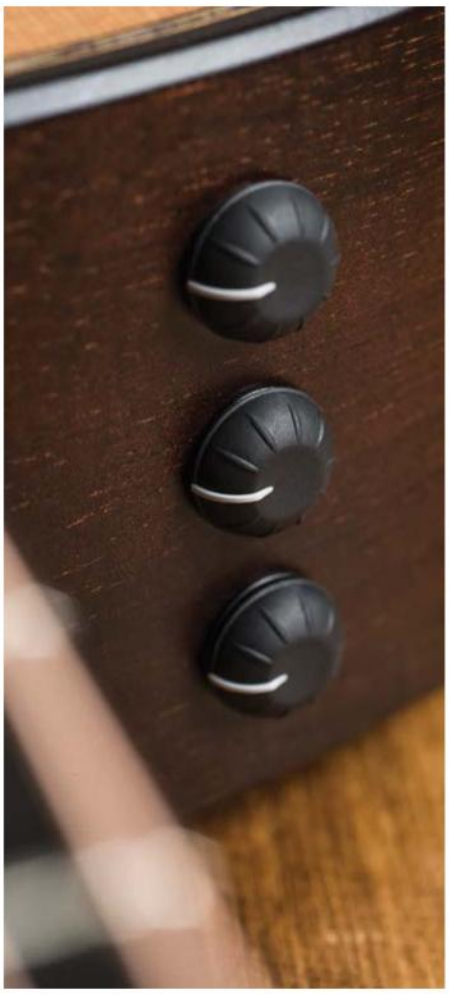
What Andy Powers and Taylor are proposing is tantamount to a reimagining of the American steel-string acoustic guitar

Rather than try to balance stiffness and flexibility within the confines of an X-brace, Powers came to the realisation that sustain and volume required stillness and movement to coexist within the same structure. Inspiration came from Powers' other great passion in life – surfing.

One morning, Andy was watching the waves coming in and noticed how they split against a stone jetty then continued their movement along each side. Taking out his notebook, Powers sketched his idea for a new bracing pattern with two braces in a V configuration arranged along the length of the top forming a very stiff 'jetty' surrounded by areas of great flexibility.

Understandably, much experimentation was required to optimise Power's initial design and pictures of the finished result reveal the result to be something deceptively simple, minimalist and undeniably beautiful to behold. A mushroom-shaped spruce patch is glued to the top in the bridge area and the two longitudinal V braces are notched so they're glued to the spruce patch as well as the top. The spruce patch extends well beyond these main braces on both sides, to assist in the transference of vibrations to the top's more flexible regions.


Taylor



The V braces are almost touching near the tail block then splay outwards to pass a centimetre or so beyond each side of the soundhole. They taper to a high point above the bridge patch then dip under a lateral brace that spans the full body width just below the soundhole. Beyond this brace, the main braces again rise and fall in height to resemble a series of waves.

A maple patch is glued over the spruce patch and between the V braces to anchor the ball ends of the strings. A pair of tapered fan braces splay outwards from each V brace and Powers' earlier innovation of a shallow trough known as a 'relief rout' cut into the top around the lower bout area carries over to this V-Class design.

Here in the UK, the 'Builder's Edition' moniker may evoke something a tad proletarian, but this K14ce Grand Auditorium is anything but. A near holographic torrefied spruce top combines with koa back and sides, heavily rolled binding and an ebony fingerboard and bridge. The body finish is described as 'Silent Satin' and the back and sides are treated to a Kona Burst.

Abalone appears front and back, with 'Spring Vine' inlays along the fingerboard and on the ebony peghead. The neck and headstock are also treated to ebony binding with koa purfling. Packing the latest Expression pickup system and arm and cutaway chamfers, the K14ce feels more like a hand-built custom instrument in the Taylor style than a regular factory Taylor.

The slanted alignment of the back braces is another notable feature of the guitar, which Powers explains. "That's a concept we introduced with some models within the 800 series a few years ago. Skewing these braces changes the back's stiffness and therefore relationship with the top. This particular guitar design can be thought of as having two diaphragms like a drum with a top and bottom head. Changing the tension of either of these membranes will change the response of the drum."

The back brace tips also stop short of the rims. Again, this is intended to promote flexibility and movement of the back and differs from the traditional practice of tucking the brace ends into the kerfing.

Although Powers' was primarily focused on tone, volume and sustain, vastly improved intonation emerged as an exciting and somewhat unexpected byproduct of V-Class bracing. This prompted further refinement of V-Class bracing as Powers' understanding of how bracing patterns effect intonation developed.

Since it's intended for players rather than guitar builders, Taylor's explanation of how it all works is more like a series of extended analogies. However, Andy Powers kindly provides *TGM* with a solid technical overview that you can read on p19. In the meantime, here's our simplified version based on discussions with the man himself.

The V braces and bridge form the 'immovable jetty' and energy from the strings equates to the waves crashing against it. The jetty/bridge is an area of stillness that, rather than absorbing string energy, effectively distributes it outwards

to carefully tuned flexible regions of the top that vibrate in response to produce sound.

Since energy isn't wasted by moving the bridge and areas of the top that don't generate sound, the energy lasts longer and is used more efficiently. Hence the improved volume and increased sustain.

Regarding how in-tune the guitar sounds, the improvement is attributed to the way that the V-Class top vibrates. With X-bracing some areas vibrate freely, others less so, and direction of movement can be completely random. Additionally, the top's surface can deform while in motion. As a consequence, not all regions of the top are physically able to vibrate at precisely the same frequency as the energy source – namely the strings.

This discrepancy accounts for the tuning difficulties common to acoustic guitars that cannot be remedied using the usual method of saddle compensation. A useful analogy might be cone cry from an electric guitar speaker.

However, V-Class bracing allows the top to vibrate in a more orderly manner like a speaker cone in terms of uniform direction of movement and absence of deformation in the shape of the vibrating surface. This ensures a very close correlation between the frequency content of the energy source and the frequencies reproduced by the top.

Powers confirms, "It was exclusively the bracing. It shows me that equal temperament for guitars was better than I thought." Let's see how all this stacks up...

Although Powers was primarily focused on tone, volume and sustain, vastly improved intonation emerged as an exciting and unexpected byproduct

In Use

Despite Taylor's radical redesign, the K14ce still sounds like a flat-top and the braces certainly don't make it sound more like an archtop or a baritone mandolin. What we have is a bright but sweet, full, deep and extremely loud acoustic guitar. No doubt the torrefied top helps, but this guitar already has a very freed up and willing response.

Curious about how the top is behaving, we tune to open D, place the guitar on a cushioned surface to dampen the back and strum a chord. By placing a hand on the top and lifting off, we quickly identify the lively parts. The K14ce vibrates freely in the areas beyond the bridge ends. The damping effect is so strong on the treble side that it can be compared to lifting a mute on and off a trumpet.

Nothing much occurs around the cutaway, but there is some vibration on the bass side of the upper bout. Perhaps most significantly, there is little audible effect when we damp the area behind the bridge. Conducting the same test with an X-braced acoustic demonstrates that the vibrating areas are more dispersed and far more of it happens directly behind the bridge. It's clear that the way V-Class bracing operates is very different.

Bass extension impresses because the K14ce has genuine low-end power that's delivered with a punch rather than a boom. Trebles are clear and

THE SCIENCE

Andy Powers explains how it all works. Brace yourself...

"An X-braced guitar top is not particularly strong, nor flexible in any direction," Powers notes. "It's meant to strike a balance. In doing this, it creates lots of more stiff and less stiff spots (the nodes and antinodes makers talk about). Those spots tend to correspond with resonance at specific frequencies. The actual frequency values can shift due to the effects of moisture in the air, barometric pressure and a bunch of other uncontrollable factors.

"All of these frequencies are, to some degree, set in motion as a bridge rocks in every direction; side to side, tail to headstock, up and down... as if the bridge were on a Bosu balance ball. As it tries to vibrate, the whole top is going along for the ride and moving all over the place. The V-Class design reduces the tail-to-neck motion so it's more like an electric guitar, and that's where the sustain comes from.

"The string energy is redirected sideways into deliberately flexible areas of a top in order to produce volume. These flexible areas are not merely flexible, since that would allow the same chaotic resonance-cancelling motion an X-braced top would but over a smaller area. They are designated flexing areas, which have a controlled geometry, and this makes them work more like speaker cones.

"So, you could say these areas are producing volume less by type of motion or changing surface shape, and more by time of motion. The time of motion can be summed together just like any other multiple frequency wave source producing a unique waveform. Because the top is capable of moving in any form of time oscillation, without significantly deforming its surface shape, the unwanted inharmonic resonance is reduced and the guitar sounds more in tune.

"The word intonation is directly translatable to 'in tune-ness' or the degree of pitch accuracy. In the guitar word, we tend to equate the word with the word compensation, which refers only to the accommodation for string stretching which occurs when a note is depressed.

"In other words, within the guitar world, we tend to write an equation that looks like 'intonation = compensation'. In reality, this equation is incomplete. The equation should look something more like 'intonation = compensation x harmony'. This second value, harmony, speaks to the pitch accuracy of the notes, which is influenced by the amplifying effect of the guitar."

airy with sparkling complex harmonics and the fine string to string balance makes for easy picking. For these characteristics alone, we could describe the K14ce as an exceptionally good-sounding Taylor acoustic with a fast percussive response, and a bright, vibrant and modern tone. But there's more to explore here.

The dramatically improved sustain manifests in various ways – the most obvious being the fact that you can play a single note or a chord and both last significantly longer than you would expect from a regular flat-top. However, what happens during the slow note decay is the really interesting bit.

Harmonics linger on inside the body like it's an analogue reverb chamber, and you can hear them continuously swell and shift. This harmonic overhang is a surprisingly rare phenomenon and we most closely associate it with vintage ladder-braced acoustics.

Once you get attuned to it, the effect is mesmerising. Try tuning to an open chord, hit the low string and let it ring then start soloing on the high strings. The low string provides a key tone while the open strings provide sympathetic resonance and it's heady stuff.

As for the intonation, the reality lives up to all the promises. We often find acoustic cutaways utterly pointless when most everything you try and play above the 12th fret sounds out of tune. With the K14ce you can imagine you have a capo on the 12th fret and play regular open chords an octave higher than usual. The octave chords chime with the open strings without any tuning sourness. All the high-up stuff you might only consider playing on an electric, is fair game on the K14ce, too.

You can see it with a strobe tuner, because even on the fast setting, notes remain rock solid rather than waver between a few cents sharp and flat. But more importantly, you can tune up with open strings confident that an open E, D and G major will all sound equally in tune.

This will be a godsend when recording, where microphones cruelly expose tuning discrepancies. The K14ce is also suited to studio work because the treble sheen and clarity that invariably have to be dialled in with an equaliser is inherent to the guitar. However, compression will be required because the dynamic range is absolutely huge.

We have become well acquainted with Taylor's Expression II pickup system, so we are not going to dwell on it here. This may be the finest we have heard it sound because what we are getting through our studio speakers is very close to the K14ce's natural sound. String balance is excellent and there's not even a hint of the phasiness we've sometimes detected.

Harmonics linger on inside the body like it's an analogue reverb chamber, and you can hear them continuously swell and shift. It's mesmerising

There is a genuine sense of excitement at Taylor about the V-Class bracing system and we think it's well justified. The sonic charms and in-tuneness are undeniable and the result is a fabulously enjoyable musical experience.

KEY FEATURES

Taylor Koa Series Builder's Edition K14ce

- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid electro-acoustic 6-string guitar. Made in the USA
- **PRICE** £5,759 (inc hard case)
- **BUILD** Torrefied Sitka spruce top with koa back and sides, neo-tropical mahogany neck, West African ebony bridge, fingerboard and peghead overlay, 14th fret neck join, Gotoh 510 tuners, black graphite nut and Micarta saddle, paua/koa body edge treatment, ebony bridge pins with abalone dots, bevelled armrest and cutaway
- **ELECTRICS** Taylor Expression II system
- **SCALE LENGTH** 647.7mm/25.5"
- **NECK WIDTH** 44.7mm at nut, 54.6mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 20mm at first fret, 21mm at 9th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 37.91mm at nut, 55.25mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 4.58lbs/2.08kg
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No extra charge
- **FINISH** Silent Satin over Kona Burst back and sides
- **CONTACT** Big Fish Studios
  01206 382224
  www.taylorguitars.com

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Tremendous projection and clarity
+ Plays in tune all over the neck
+ Vibrant and complex harmonics
+ Powerful bass response

– Look elsewhere for vintage-style acoustic tones

An original and imaginative redesign of the core structure of an acoustic guitar that has resulted in the finest six-string Taylor we've ever played

10/10

WOOD FOR THE TREES

As the company he founded continues to innovate, Bob Taylor's work guarantees that acoustic guitars will have a future way beyond even his own lifetime...

Bob Taylor with two of the fruits of his company's labour

Q With Andy Powers doing such wonderful things at Taylor, it seems that the future of the company is in excellent hands. What was it like when you heard a V-Class guitar for the first time?

"Watching Andy soar is one of the great pleasures of my life. When I first heard the V-Class guitar and saw how he did it, I marvelled at his creativity. To be able to break away from how it's always been done and think of something new and better is an amazing feat.

"Once you see it, you think, 'Yes, of course, makes sense!' But like playing the guitar, you might be able to play the solo to *Hotel California*, but could you have thought of it? What Andy created there is truly brilliant. He gets a standing ovation from me."

Q In the light of the publicity generated by CITES changes over the last couple of years, do you think that guitar players are more aware and educated than ever when it comes to the materials that their instruments are made from?

"Yes, of course, they're certainly more aware and are becoming educated. We still have a long way to go, not just for the players, but for dealers, journalists, and even manufacturers. I'm still learning. We now know that wood is getting scarce, more care must be taken when using trees from a forest, and that replanting is key to long-term success. I am committed to sharing all I know over the next many years, as long as I have left to live. I'm shooting for another 30 years! Wish me luck."

Q You've stated previously that profitability is the key to sustainability – which suggests that sustainability isn't just about planting trees, sitting back and watching them grow. Could you elaborate on this in relation to your efforts in Cameroon and Hawaii?

"Well, it takes money to plant trees, regardless of whether those trees are on community lands, like in Cameroon, or on your own property. If we buy our own property in Hawaii, for example, which is part of my program, then we have some huge expenses. For koa, it requires about $1 million for each 100 acres planted, after you purchase the property, and Hawaiian land isn't cheap. The trees need care along the way, so there's ongoing costs partly included in that million, but just this one simple example shows how, for a private company, profitability is needed to fund it. Another system that we utilise is finding willing property owners who will work with us as we take old, dead and dying trees on their property, and use the value in those trees to reforest for them. This requires that they have vision too and we do find people who do, so that's fantastic.

"Cameroon is quite expensive, too. We are doing a lot there while being mindful of what we spend, but I can tell you we're into very high figures spent. But it's the right thing to do. It just is. And this must be funded by profit, of course, as where else could this money come from?

"We have many methods, but it requires that Taylor Guitars is financially viable, and that I am willing to spend my own money as well. To me, though, it's a pleasure."

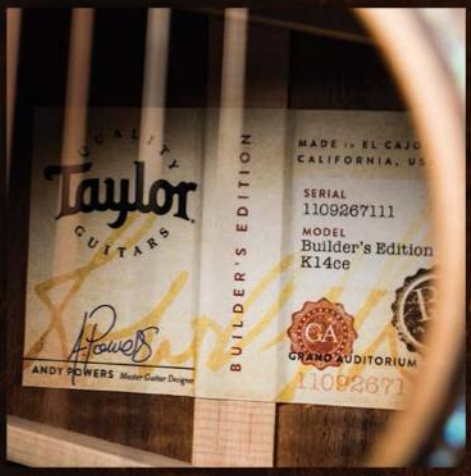
Q Do your various overseas conservation projects still leave you time to tinker with new guitar designs and prototypes?

"Yes, I do get to tinker with guitars, prototypes, and other creative woodworking and factory pursuits. Being creative, solving problems, and building things has been and will always be a hugely important part of my life. I'd die if I couldn't. It's like breathing to me."

Q Do you feel like there are still holy grails out there when it comes to mainstream guitar manufacture? Is another big turning point on the horizon?

"Boy, I have to tell you, there's some great guitars out there, both new and old. I'm still absorbing V-Class and I'm so excited to implement it that I can't predict the next horizon today. I confess that that's a short-lived condition for me. With each achievement in guitars I quickly feel like I ate that meal, and now I'm hungry again.

"But with the colleagues that surround me at Taylor Guitars, it seems like life is renewed and new horizons are being imagined every single day. Not just the next guitar design, but the next tools, methods, tonewoods, sustainability, marketing, care of our people, and what we can do as a company to help our colleagues and community – all of these things. I believe strongly in the power of invention and that creativity unfolds before us as a result of serious daily chopping of wood and carrying of water. We just work with purpose and good things come."



ANTHEM PUBLISHING